

Library History Today Blog 1

Library History Today is a convenient way to post information, book reviews, and comments about Canadian library history. Why have a blog on Canadian History? There is a concern with contemporary library political, administrative, economic, and social issues that are relevant to library history. What influence does the study of the "past" have on the "present?" I try to show that there is a dual function that critical history performs: it helps us understand how past thoughts and actions were shaped and that it provides us with a deeper awareness of present changes. In this context, past events, facts, trends, and people can be examined using historical methods and critical theories. As well, we can gain an understanding of explanations for causes and consequences, the use of narratives and evidence, and different versions of the past.

We are constantly reinterpreting history (as events and as historical accounts) using new concepts which emerge from uncovering more evidence and rethinking accepted facts in the light of new ideas and research methodology. "History" can be taken to mean what we accept happened in the past (or, conversely, what did not take place); it can also mean what is written as a result of continuous dialogue: what took place (events); why or how things happened (explanations); who was involved (personages); when did events occur (chronological dimension); and how ideas were formed and the influence they had on contemporaries.

Historical understanding helps us to comprehend cause-and-effect relationships and to avoid judging the past (and by extension "today") in terms of current norms and values. By looking at past library events and decisions in Ontario and across Canada we can develop alternative approaches to contemporary conditions based on a better awareness of the likely consequences. Historical memory is one of the keys to self-identity.

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[Canada Needs Libraries](#) by the Canadian Library Council, 1945

[Two 1940s Canadian Theses on Academic Libraries](#) by Dorothy Hamilton and Winifred Snider

[Libraries in the Life of the Canadian Nation](#) by Canadian Library Council, 1946

[The Carnegie Corporation Advisory Group on Canadian College Libraries, 1930–35](#)

[Building Canadian Electronic Libraries: the Ontario Experience, 1960–2010](#)

[A Survey of Montreal Library Facilities and a Proposed Plan for a Library System](#) (1942) by Mary Duncan Carter

[The Role of Canadian Public Libraries in Adult Education](#) (1942) by Gordon Gourlay

[Cross Country Checkup](#) and the Library of the Future (circa 1995)

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[Report on Canadian Libraries](#) (1941) by Charles F. McCombs

The Future of the National Library of Canada in the Nineteen Eighties (1979)

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The Public Library in Canada in Relation to the Government (1939) by Jean E. Stewart.

Alfred Fitzpatrick and the Beginning of Ontario's Travelling Libraries, 1900-05

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The Library Book: A History of Service to British Columbia by David Obee (2011)

A Book in Every Hand by Don Kerr (2005)

Library Spirit in the Nordic and Baltic Countries (2009)

The Most Attractive Resort in Town by Barbara Myrvold (2009)

The Quebec Library Association by Peter F. McNally and Rosemary Cochrane (2009)

Ottawa and Nepean Public Libraries in 20th Century by Phil Jenkins

Local Library, Global Passport by J. Patrick Boyer (2008)

Paper Talk by Brendan F.R. Edwards (2005)

The Morton Years by Elizabeth Hulse (1995)

Public Library Boards in Postwar Ontario, (2012), by Lorne and Karen Bruce

Places to Grow: Public Libraries and Communities in Ontario, 1930-2000 by Lorne Bruce (revised 2020)

The Case for a National Library of Canada, 1933–1946

“A Plea for a National Library” — A Canadian Odyssey Begins in 1911

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The “Politics” of Public Libraries Again

Saturday, October 7, 2017

Photo Essay on Ontario's Edwardian Public Libraries (1989)

An illustrated address I originally gave at the Canadian Library Association library history interest group session at Edmonton in June 1989. Thanks to Pearl Milne, University of Guelph Library, for her digital assistance with these photographs. Additional images of Ontario libraries ranging from the early- to mid-twentieth century are archived at my older University of Guelph original website, [Libraries Today](#).

Photographs can be used in historical accounts for many different purposes. Often, they serve to illustrate the reality a writer wishes to capture, an effective and time-honoured technique. But they also may be used in their own right, not just as adjuncts to the literary record, but as original sources. Images are part of a broader methodological trend, one that has historians utilizing many non-traditional sources both to establish information about people, places, and events, or to develop new lines of inquiry. Of course, visual history is not new in itself, what has changed in the past twenty years is that more rigorous use of photographs as historical sources has evolved.

Historical photographs are being used now in a variety of critical ways in research and teaching. (Note 1) In some cases, they may establish or verify facts, an important consideration when traditional documents are lacking or present discrepancies. Visual histories depicting social or cultural values of an era or place are becoming more frequent; in these works, photographs frequently help to determine the text which may be supplemented by other resources. Sometimes, photographs can be used to reinforce historical interpretations shaped with other source materials. In library history all these photographic

dimensions can be employed when different aspects concerning the history of public libraries are analyzed or narrated. (Note 2)

Uxbridge Library, c 1887



Many photographs pertaining to library history exist at local libraries, museums, and archives across Ontario. Although there is no comprehensive catalogue or index to holdings, they can be as valuable as surviving textual sources because they can be used to formulate new ideas about libraries or to reinterpret a period. For instance, historical works frequently refer to the four decades between 1880 and 1920 as

"Victorian" or "Edwardian" or as a "Progressive Era." This period is normally characterized as one of growth and progress for Ontario public libraries, an expansive theme culminating in the revised Public Libraries Act of 1920. Like most eras, the years between 1880-1920 were ones of transition for libraries, a view confirmed by many photographs.

By 1914, distinctively modernist trends were emerging in Ontario's libraries; the Victorian synthesis of ideas and methods common to mechanics' institutes and their immediate successors, free libraries, was giving way to modern trends. Simply put, the public library in the first decade of the twentieth century was modifying its functions and assuming additional roles in society, a process allowing it to serve more people and redefine its character as "modern" at a time when Modernism, a conscious cultural rejection of the past by twentieth-century artists and scientists, was beginning to sweep western nations. At the same time, Ontario was becoming an urban province directed by new values. Historical photographs of libraries help indicate the extent of these fundamental changes.



Toronto Mechanics' Institute

Victorian Heritage

In the Edwardian era there was a mixture of old and new in many Ontario libraries, particularly in cities. The physical reminder of mechanics' institutes, a symbol of nineteenth-century ideals, survived in a few places, notably Toronto where the old institute building, built in the Italian Renaissance style of the 1850s at considerable cost, lingered on, first as an undersized



central library, then, after the larger reference library opened on College Street in 1909, as a community branch at the intersection of Church and Adelaide. It finally closed its doors just before the Great Depression.

Toronto Church St. Branch, 1924

Other pre-Carnegie structures, specially commissioned as free libraries, existed in larger centres at Hamilton and London.

London's library, designed by the local architect Herbert Matthews in 1895, reflected the popularity of eclectic exteriors, in this case, a Romanesque facade with conical towers, rounded arches, and smooth-faced red brick cladding. It was a late-Victorian revival style that imparted a sense of permanence and strength, solid qualities most communities were anxious to express in the educational facilities they were striving to build at this time.



London Public Library



Hamilton Public Library, c.1905

Interiors of Victorian free libraries were usually spartan: for example, in Hamilton, a building completed at a cost of about \$45,000 in 1890, furnishings in the reference section, general reading room, and ladies' reading room were basic staples. These rooms flanked a main corridor leading to a large counter behind which stretched a closed stack room capable of accommodating

50,000 books. The separate reading area for women was a fashionable (and space consuming) *fin-de-siècle* enhancement that recognized the increasing number of women registering as borrowers. Children under 16 years were less fortunate; generally, they were denied borrowing privileges. In this respect Hamilton's library, led by Richard Lancefield, was relatively liberal; its board began to lower the age restriction for children before 1900. Children's rooms and storytelling would be future projects.



Claremont Library, c.1895



Dundas Library, c.1896

In the smaller communities throughout rural Ontario, libraries had to make do with more modest resources: rented offices, donated property or rooms, or combined business quarters. The small, one-room, subscription library managed by volunteers and part-time staff was commonplace. For instance, at Dundas the library occupied part of the old Elgin House block on busy King

Street. In the police village of Claremont, the library operated from a commercial storefront for several years under the guidance of the incumbent shoemaker-librarian, Mr. James Jobbitt, who resigned in 1903.

At Streetsville (right), affairs were more upscale. In 1901 the board of management received a gift comprising part of a small frame commercial building. It converted the space into a serviceable one-room library housed with a jewelry shop.



Streetsville was considered advanced by small-town Ontario standards: it operated on a free basis without an age limitation for children, possessed a card catalogue, and used the decimal classification system at a time when the Education Department still clung to an outdated class system adapted from mechanics' institutes.

Edwardian Progress

When Carnegie grants became readily available, architects, trustees, and workers began transforming the organization of interior space and the interrelationships between staff and patrons. Improved functions, programs, and arrangements for access were under active development between 1900-10: there were larger branch libraries, children's services, improved

reference service, better classification and cataloging schemes, and open access to collections. The familiar Victorian free

Sarnia Library, c. 1903

library conventions--the emphasis on physical custody of books, on printed catalogues for holdings, and on public reading rooms; the use of indicators (a British practice) for circulation status in lending departments; and a desire to offer lectures or evening classes for the technical education of working classes--was ebbing. Libraries were changing their methods, expanding the scope of their public services, and re-evaluating their connections with another developing field, adult education. The modern public library as we know it today was emerging.



Laying Toronto Reference Cornerstone

Carnegie gifts to local communities for library buildings not only attracted public attention at openings and the laying of cornerstones but also stimulated rhetoric about the merit of libraries. The *Globe* covered one Toronto ceremony, presided over by Ontario's Lieutenant-Governor and Chief Justice William G. Falconbridge, the board chairman, on 27 November 1906:

His Lordship stated that there was no question in this day of the value of free libraries to communities. The objection that a preponderating number of works of fiction circulated through a free library, instead of more solid reading, was not a serious objection in the mind of the Chief Justice, who admitted that he was no enemy to novel reading. . . .



Free Public Library, Belleville, 1911

The box deposited in the corner-stone contained, among other things, a catalogue of the central circulating library, copies of the Toronto daily papers, Canadian coins, and a scroll containing names of those directly interested in its construction. This type of ceremony was re-enacted on many occasions during the Carnegie years. Sometimes a benefaction other than Carnegie's was invoked, for example at Belleville, Henry Corby, a Conservative member of Parliament, donated money for a library that opened January 1908 in the remodelled Merchants' Bank building.



Berlin (Kitchener) Library, c.1905



St. Thomas Library, c.1905

After 1900, the interior organization and services of libraries began to change dramatically. At Berlin (now Kitchener), the traditional plan of housing a stack room behind a barrier surmounted by grillwork and railing originally was followed, but later the board decided to permit open access to the collection except for fiction. A special area set off for children and use of the decimal classification were enterprising steps here. The same rationale about safeguarded free access to all books except works of fiction also applied at St. Thomas. The interior here was more ornate: classical busts and handsome wood columns graced the main corridor leading to the circulation desk, the reading room directly across from it, and the reference section at the end of the hall.



Sarnia interior, c.1905

Sarnia's library was constructed along similar lines, but here the board adopted unrestricted access to all books, a bold move in 1903, although the building design easily allowed this measure. The board was fortunate to employ Patricia Spereman, who developed children's services and conducted story hours. She had trained at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn and became a pioneer in children's work in Ontario and Canada.



Sarnia Story Hour, 1907

Carnegie exteriors were celebrated (or detested) for their Beaux-Arts style featuring classical columns, steps, porticos, and domes. It was an exuberant style with classical lines and elements that promoted civic grandeur even in smaller cities which served as markets for the surrounding rural populace. Guelph's library was an Ontario leader in these regards and noted for its lack of functional interior space. However, some architects were influenced by local factors. In Cornwall, where a significant French-speaking community existed, a French

chateau appearance was conveyed by the entrance, roof, and small corner tower.



Guelph Public Library, c.1905



Cornwall Public Library, 1906

Some architects were able to use Beaux-Arts features in a restrained fashion; perhaps the most capable was Alfred H. Chapman, who in association with Wickson and Gregg, designed Toronto's reference library on the corner of College and St. George streets at a cost of more than \$250,000. This two-storey structure featured large windows flanked by Corinthian pilasters, soft yellow brick, and main entrance set off to one side. By the standards of the day and even during the bleakness of the Great War, it was an approachable "people place."



Toronto Reference Library, 1915

* * * * *

In the years immediately preceding the First World War, therefore, Ontario's public libraries went through unprecedented change. The assumptions and characteristics common to Victorian free libraries--an adult clientele, priority on the safekeeping of books, limited services for users, systems of retrieval based on printed catalogues and indicators, classification and cataloguing systems that applied subject categories and accessioning practice developed in mechanics' institutes, and revival architectural styles--were being challenged and supplanted. The pace of change obviously had quickened in Edwardian Ontario, but faith in the library's contribution to societal progress, a belief that eventual improvements in society would ensue by assisting personal initiatives and stimulating their success, was unshaken. The service ethic became the most important constant in this era, a powerful rationale that spurred new library developments in a society that prized individual effort and public duty.

It is difficult to convey the spirit of any era or activity, but a review of pictures in this brief photo study reveals that it was time for libraries and librarians to look ahead, to question old views and methods, and to adopt fresh ideas.

PICTURE CAPTIONS AND CREDITS

Assistance with digitizing these photographs was kindly rendered by Pearl Milne of the University of Guelph Library.

- Fig.1 The Toronto Mechanics' Institute before 1884 [AO, S-1178].
- Fig. 2 An old Toronto library: the Church Street branch, 8 Feb. 1924 [NAC, PA-86436].
- Fig. 3 London Public Library, n.d. [NAC, PA-32789].
- Fig. 4 View of Hamilton Public Library interior, c.1905 [AO, S-2042].
- Fig. 5 Public library at Dundas, c.1896 [AO, S-6934].
- Fig. 6 Palmer & Jobbitt store-library at Claremont, c.1895/1903 [AO, S-13475].
- Fig. 7 Streetsville's new library, n.d. [AO, S-16035].
- Fig. 8 Chief Justice Falconbridge laying the cornerstone of the public reference library in Toronto [AO, S-1252].
- Fig. 9 Free Public Library, Belleville, 1911 [NAC, C-21464].
- Fig. 10 Berlin Public Library interior, c.1905 [AO, S-2044].
- Fig. 11 Central corridor of St. Thomas Public Library, c.1905 [AO, S-2055].
- Fig. 12 Lending desk and stack room at Sarnia, c.1905 [AO, S-2057].
- Fig. 13 After the Story Hour, 2 March 1907 [AO, S-2058].
- Fig. 14 Sham pillars: Guelph Public Library, c.1905 [AO, S-2035].
- Fig. 15 Cornwall Public Library, 20 Oct. 1906 [AO, S-2032].
- Fig. 16 Toronto Reference Library at 214 College Street, 13 March 1915 [NAC, PA-61384].

AO: Archives of Ontario

NAC: National Archives of Canada

NOTES

1. For discussions on the use of photographs see:

Carol E. Hoffeecker, "The Emergence of a Genre: the Urban Pictorial History," *Public Historian*, 5 (4) 1983: 37-48;
Walter Rundell, Jr., "Photographs as Historical Evidence: Early Texas Oil," *American Archivist* 41 (4) 1978: 373-398;
Stuart T. Miller, "The Value of Photographs as Historical Evidence," *Local Historian* 15 (8) 1983: 468-473;
Timothy J. Crimmins, "Is a Picture Worth a Thousand Words? Illustrated Urban Histories," *Journal of Urban History* 13 (1) 1986: 82-91; and
W. Gillies Ross, "The Use and Misuse of Historical Photographs: A Case Study from Hudson Bay, Canada," *Arctic Anthropology* 27 (2) 1990: 93-112.
 For library applications see **Boyd Childress**, "Library History, University History, and Photographic History: Some Considerations for Research," *Journal of Library History* 22 (1) 1987: 70-84.

2. Recent Canadian works include:

Margaret Beckman, John Black and Stephen Langmead, "Carnegie Libraries in Canada," *Canadian Library Journal* 38(6) 1981: 386-390 and *The Best Gift; a Record of Carnegie Libraries in Ontario* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1983);
David R. Conn and Barry McCallum, "Heritage to Hi-Tech; Evolution of Image and Function in Canadian Public Library Buildings," in **Peter F. McNally** (ed.), *Readings in Canadian Library History* (Ottawa: Canadian Library Association, 1986), pp. 123-149;
Margaret Penman, *A Century of Service; Toronto Public Library 1883-1983* (Toronto: Toronto Public Library, 1983); and
Barbara Myrvold, "The First Hundred Years: Toronto Public Library 1883-1983," in **McNally**, *Readings*, pp. 65-79.

Saturday, October 07, 2017

Public Libraries and the Information Age, (1995)

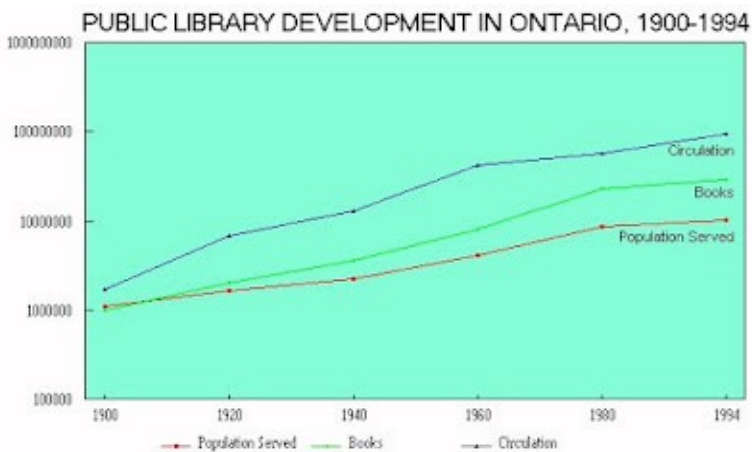
[An edited version for the Internet of my speech given at
Kitchener Public Library, Monday, Oct. 16, 1995]

INTRODUCTION

It is a pleasure to be here today to help celebrate Ontario's Library Week. Although I have been an academic librarian for many years, I fondly remember working in and using public libraries. Just recently, I returned to King City library this past June to observe the twenty-fifth anniversary of its opening. King City was one of the first smaller public libraries to open in York Region after the 1966 Public Libraries Act consolidated the older association libraries. We must remember it is important to have celebrations, to mark anniversaries, to promote and to market public library services. In this area, for example, we have three of the oldest public libraries in Canada--Guelph formed in 1883, Kitchener in 1884, and Waterloo in 1888. Certainly, the Kitchener library has been prominent in Ontario circles for a long time. We recognize the outstanding contributions of Mabel Dunham to Canadian librarianship. We can look back sixty years to the Great Depression when the first national library study, Libraries in Canada, noted that Kitchener possessed one of the best collections of lantern slides and German books in Canada. So a tradition of fine service to the community measured by provincial and national trends has long been a standard in this community.

As for Library Week in Ontario, we should remember that 1995 is the one-hundredth anniversary of our first provincial Public Libraries Act. Previous to 1895, free libraries coexisted beside mechanics' institute libraries and literary society libraries. These organizations received grants from agriculture and education departments up until 1895 and have a complex history in their

own right. But it was exactly a hundred years ago when our provincial legislature consolidated and combined a number of acts into one under the Dept. of Education with the result that the public library concept and terminology that we are familiar with today was first established in Ontario. Much has changed on the municipal and provincial scene over time, but the public library which is managed locally and normally does not directly charge for services has continued to grow throughout this century as we can see from the following logarithmic graph on population served, circulation, and books held.



So much for progress and advancement. What is the public library doing today? Right now there are many challenges, perhaps too many for comfort. Management challenges, e.g. budgets--they are always a problem. Technological challenges, e.g. computers--they are always being upgraded. Educational challenges, e.g. learner-centred environments created by the proliferation of information. There are, of course, other challenges, but I want to speak about the incredible growth of information that seems at times to engulf us and to submerge libraries. We are familiar with the general trends surrounding the universe of information. After all, it is the subject of many popular books and magazine articles such as the recent October issue of National Geographic on the information revolution. Currently, we are undergoing a synthesis of scholarly/popular

interpretations of the time and society we are living in. I am sure many of us are familiar with Alvin Toffler's Third Wave and its predictions for future change, but he is only one of many seers. For a moment, I would like to link some of these societal conceptualizations with books we may remember from the past half-century in the following table.

MODERN SOCIETAL AND CULTURAL CHANGES IDENTIFIED SINCE 1940

Year Societal/Cultural Change	Source
1941 Managerial Revolution	Burnham, Managerial Revolution
1950 Cybernetics	Wiener, Human Use of Human Beings
1950 Lonely Crowd	Riesman, Lonely Crowd
1956 Organization Man	Whyte, Organizational Man
1958 Consumer Society	Galbraith, Affluent Society
1959 Two Cultures Revolution	Snow, Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution
1960 Environmentalism	Carson, Silent Spring
1960 End of Ideology	Bell, End of Ideology
1962 Paradigm Shift	Kuhn, Structure of Scientific Revolution
1963 Atomic Age	Atomic Scientists, The Atomic Age
1964 Global Village	McLuhan, Understanding Media
1964 Technological Society	Ellul, Technological Society
1968 Postmodern Society	Etzioni, The Active Society
1970 Leisure Society	Parker, Future of Work and Leisure
1972 Sustainable Development	Club of Rome, Limits to Growth
1973 Post-Industrial Society	Bell, Coming of Post-Industrial Society
1977 Information Economy	Porat, Information Economy
1979 Computer Age	Dertousoz & Moses, The Computer Age
1980 Third Wave	Toffler Third Wave
1983 Third World	Worsley, Three Worlds
1986 Information Age	Beniger, Control Revolution
1990 Information Age	Toffler, Powershift

Many of these contemporary accounts seem to suggest that we have entered into a new era in which information about societal political/economic structures is the key ingredient in our lives. To some extent, we are overwhelmed with the enormous quantity of material that touches on this subject.

THE INFORMATION AGE: WHAT IS IT?

The Information Society or Information Age is a new phenomenon since 1950 which brings with it new challenges as we seek to integrate an expanding universe of print and multimedia sources into our daily lives. The two terms often are used to describe a cybernetic society in which there is a great dependence on the use of computers and data transmission linkages to generate and transmit information. By contrast, our familiar reference frame of an industrial society relied on machines to augment human physical labour to produce goods and services. Now, through a process of continual change, geographic barriers are being dissolved, businesses are more interconnected, and relationships between workers and workplace are changing more rapidly.

However, information (or data, or ideas, or knowledge) has long played, in one way or another, a significant role in human culture and society, and has shaped, over a long period of time, the way in which we behave and think. I think what is now proclaimed to be the Information Age is terminology that can be applied to all stages of human development. We must recognize that improvements in communications during the industrial period since 1800, and I am speaking of the telegraph, telephone, postal delivery, radio, television, and modern printing presses, have been in part a response to the need to process more information. For example, just think of one historical period taught in school, the Renaissance. It is regarded as a rebirth of knowledge, the rediscovery of and transmission of ideas and texts about classical authors which transformed European culture and thinking in the fourteen and fifteenth centuries. In a historical context, Information has been with us a long time. One can illustrate themes in information by looking at literacy, censorship, the organization of knowledge, the economics of information, and roles which institutions such as the public library and schools have played.

The definition of "information" varies incredibly. It is often used interchangeably with terms such as data, knowledge, understanding, messages, wisdom, and ideas. I am not going to discuss the lexical nuances at length. Instead, I prefer to use the

term broadly in the way it is used across many disciplines and in many countries today. We talk and read about consumer information, management information systems, information technology, information overload, the information highway, and so on, all the time. In the past fifty years information has assumed an important new meaning. In a new sense, borrowed from the sciences, Information has come to express whatever can be transmitted through a channel connecting a source with a receiver. What is being communicated, a message, is information. Considerations about the character or quality of what is being transmitted--a legal live broadcast of the judgement in the O.J. Simpson trial or the latest evening hockey score in the newspaper--become less relevant in this sense. The older distinction between information as mostly specific data with potential usefulness and knowledge as aggregated thought that is applied usefully has eroded. In this process, information has almost come to subsume knowledge.

In the twentieth century, there has been a radical transformation in the role of information in society as well as in the technology used in its production and dissemination. At the turn of the last century, printed information reigned supreme in Europe and North American communities. This, of course, is no longer the case. New electronic forms of communication have multiplied, reducing the primacy of the print medium, but not yet displacing it. Instead, each new form of communication has supplemented printing and publishing (we must remember that more than two billion copies of books are produced in North America alone each year). Whole new industries, such as television and cable networks, each with its own set of directions and organization, have grown up around each of these new forms of communication. The proliferation of communication technology has also brought with it a situation in which the content of these various forms of communication are merging as forms of digitized information that combine print, voice, video, and graphics for educational and recreational purposes.

Just as the printing press served as an agent of change in the nineteenth century, so have telecommunications given us the

capacity to transfer information instantaneously across vast distances in the twentieth century. The advent of the telegraph in the 1830s, the telephone in the 1870s, radio, which came into being in 1901, and television shortly afterwards had by mid-century led to the slogan "Global Village." Thirty years after Marshall McLuhan, the computer has effectively established itself as the dominant means of handing textual material as well as numeric data. Combined with telecommunications systems, the computer appears to have created a major turning point in the history of information. It is this amalgamation of new systems, and the emphasis, perhaps even devotion, that is placed on information, that has brought into being the phrase "Information Age."

Today there is a significant new approach to the production, storage, distribution, and use of various types of information. Previous information "systems," such as the book, were based on the process that the message that entered a system was the message that was received. This is no longer the case: the newer communication technologies on the Internet are interactive, that is the capability of modifying messages and creating new messages exists within the system. As well, in the new systems, such as electronic bulletin boards, information is controlled to a greater extent by managers who store and transmit information. In older systems, the original creator or supplier of the information was in control. Thus, a new set of relationships and responsibilities is emerging but has not yet been clearly established, witness problems with copyright and censorship on the Internet under proposed new American legal regulations scheduled for 1996.

The evolving electronic information systems also pose new directions for issues that have been around for some time. Take literacy as an example. It is no longer sufficient to be print literate, i.e. to read and write, and the idea of audio or visual literacy has in turn been supplanted by stress on computer literacy. Literacy has come to be seen as the ability to use information in various forms that it is presented in and to master the skills and techniques necessary to use the systems involved

in managing information, a.k.a. computers. Most commentators seem to see this new literacy not only as an expansion of traditional literacy but also an expansion that requires the development of new skills and new ways to deal with information.

Another issue for re-examination is the economics of information. Information in many forms has a high economic value and indeed it is said the information industry is becoming the engine driving our economy. We have become an "information economy" with "information workers" taking their place beside manufacturers, industrialists, steel workers, and cab drivers. In fact, as Alvin Toffler writes in his *Third Wave*, we have entered a new post-smoke stack economy. Whenever someone watches television, rents a video, or reads a magazine, they are substituting information in place a manufactured product such as a tennis racket or automobile created by the traditional production modes we have known. Information normally is language (radio, TV, books, tapes, magazines) or image (TV, movies, videos) and the information derived from it is relatively inexpensive to replicate. One can verify this by looking in stores at prices for tapes, videos, record albums, cd-roms, and so on. This fact makes for economies of scale since most of the business investment is devoted to developing the first copy.

But from the individual citizen's perspective on information resources, there seems to arise a major issue from this economic transformation. Within a print and broadcast culture the typical user is not expected to invest significant amounts of money into information systems hardware (e.g. books, radios, portable television sets, videos, music recordings). Purchases were made for an item, such as a record, or for a right, such as admission to a movie theatre. However, with the growth of personal and business computing enterprises and new home games after the mid-1980s, a fundamental alteration is occurring. With computers and telecommunications systems, the user, not the manufacturer, publisher, or broadcaster, becomes responsible for significant financial outlays in the investment in information

systems equipment and peripherals, such as Nintendo and modems which require frequent upgrades. Obviously, there is a danger that economically disadvantaged families--indeed whole countries--will not be able to take complete advantage of our information-rich universe which is dominated by the English language. This perspective was most recently voiced in the August issue of Scientific American which dealt with foreign language coverage in North American reference sources.

A third area of concern deals with control and freedom of information. Increasingly on a local, regional, national and international scale the regulation of the free flow of information becomes more difficult. A host of issues might be dealt with here, such as censorship in networks, copyright infringements in electronic formats, freedom of information, and the need for personal privacy. Some national governments consider the control of information as a vital element of state policy. Nevertheless, the advanced computerized telecommunication networks make information more readily accessible and make it more difficult to restrict information flow. What we need to balance, to some degree, is the right of the individual to obtain free access to information with the right of individuals to control and limit access to their personal information.

Finally, the role of institutions such as schools and libraries in the dissemination of information has come under scrutiny at a time when public spending is being reduced in stages at the federal and provincial levels in Canada. In the past century, public libraries have developed their own unique sets of procedures for organizing print and audio-visual knowledge. Classification systems such as the Dewey Decimal System have been adopted, reference service desks created, children's departments set up, audio-visual departments organized, interlibrary lending procedures arranged, and so on. Now a glut of information threatens to make libraries irrelevant: in the fictional library of Jorge Luis Borges--the Library of Babel--the librarian is unable to find anything in a collection boasting an infinite number of books.

At a general level, society recognizes that people need to gain access to information. To make the best use of it there needs to be an effective system for organizing information on a community basis so it can be retrieved effectively. The public library has responded to this need in varying ways for many decades through years of economic restraint, as witnessed by the Great Depression of the 1930s, and years of growth characterized by the 1960s and 1970s. The question posed in the 1990s returns to the basic functions of the library and what it should offer the public.

To conclude my brief introduction to the so-called Information Age, I would like to stress that divergent views exist about the possible effects of the development of a full-fledged Information Society. On one side, advocates insist that it will empower people, providing direct access to opportunities previously unavailable to them. On the other side, there are pessimists who believe that the global economic structure that information provides the foundation for what will ultimately displace individuals and communities with totalitarian capitalist structures. There is little doubt that the development of information can produce dramatic changes, but it remains to be seen if the nature of those impacts will be determined mostly by the structural requirements of new computerized technologies or if their impact will be influenced to a greater degree by social/political forces, such as state regulation.

What can be said, however, is that the role of information and related communication technology continues to expand by leaps and bounds in the 1990s. I think, paradoxically at first, that the capacity to strengthen both centralization and decentralization is taking place. Today's management business texts, such as *Fifth Discipline* and *Megatrends 2000*, stress flexible ways of organizing business in a deregulated, privatized environment. Opportunities seem to exist for local or small entrepreneurs who are willing to switch organizational and production facilities freely from one place to another in order to capture a share of a global marketplace. Evidently, the new information networks are no longer tied to places and it is possible to attain a centralization

of managerial control and decentralization of production. On the other hand, it is not difficult to see why massive corporate concentrations are taking place in communications, why Disney and ABC are merging to dominate and make money from an industry composed of independent communication enterprises and local broadcast channels.

Finally, new groups and audiences are in the process of interconnection, e.g. electronic mail groups and dial-up bulletin boards, direct telemarketing, and subscription cable television. The principal media--television or video or the computer, and the telephone, are connected in many new networks that are integrating sound, speech, text, data, and images and permitting the connection of persons in lieu of the connection of places. It seems the most important communication patterns of the future will be interaction and conversation, not the hierarchical transmission from a mass communication centre to a mass audience tracked by Neilson ratings or recounted by George Orwell in Nineteen Eighty-Four. Traditional community ties are being replaced by much more selective groupings in diffuse social networks. Further, an increasing number of social activities will rely on integrated online media in place of traditional face-to-face modes, e.g. telemarketing, and so on. As we can see, the Information Age or Society promises to be an exciting time, although it is too early to predict the demise of door-to-door sales!

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY'S ROLE: WHAT IS IT?

Let us turn now to the public library. Where does it fit into an information revolution which is taking place? As far back as 1950, a prominent scientist, Norbert Wiener, wrote a book, *The Human Use of Human Beings*, which applied insights gained in the computer technology of his era to the study of human communication systems using information in the new sense. Even at this early stage of the computer era, he emphasized that the proliferation of information reinforced existing relationships by placing a greater burden on society to disseminate and store information. The needs and the complexity of modern life make

greater demands on this process of information than ever before, and our press, our museums, our scientific laboratories, our universities, our libraries and textbooks, are obliged to meet the needs of this process or fail in their purpose. The fact that he specifically mentioned libraries in the same sentence with kindred educational and research-oriented institutions indicates to me that he recognized their crucial importance in the next stage of the information revolution.

I feel the basic question to be resolved right now is: will libraries be able to adapt new technologies to information demands during a period of retrenchment in government funding? Well, let us start with some good news. Although the public library generally is viewed today as a print-based institution, I have already referred to the ability of libraries to integrate formats such as films, videos, slides, records, and audio cassettes into their services. This activity began in earnest after the Second World War and continues today. Those of you who have used libraries over the past two decades realize that public libraries have successfully automated their acquisitions, cataloguing and circulation functions and introduced online and cd-rom products to their reference and interlibrary loan services. There have been successes and some failures along the way, nevertheless, by the mid-1990s it safe to say that most urban public libraries in Ontario serving more than 30,000 people have either made or are in the midst of the transition to automated systems. There is no doubt that libraries can incorporate new electronic formats into collections, in fact, these formats reduce rather than create barriers to public access. The managerial and professional expertise therefore exists to deal successfully with new electronic information resources on a community-wide basis.

If we review technical changes in libraries, we can see that online public catalogues have replaced card catalogues which first appeared in Ontario at the turn of the century during the Carnegie building program. Bar codes and wands have replaced the photo charging systems that had become common library procedures by the late 1960s. Online searching of remote databases is another recent innovation: users can ask to have

many different searches performed. Full-text retrievable searches are possible, for example from Toronto where the Globe and Mail was the first major newspaper in North America to introduce computerized editions in the late 1970s. Subject specific inquiries can be made outside this country, for example, to California where large corporations (like Lockheed Dialog) have established huge database libraries that provide access to many subject areas, especially business, on a fee per use basis. And we must remember that library automation was accomplished during a period of recessions and cutbacks in the 1980s and 1990s, so libraries have not only been able to introduce automation they have been able to achieve economy in operation at the same time.

It seems to me, therefore, that public libraries can build on their knowledge and experience to extend their range of services. It is certain that the electronic information superhighway, the Internet, is offering people the ability to communicate via computers and to make available vast quantities of information that dwarf local library resources as we know them now. Let us be clear that people are not going to stop reading--in fact, digitized print is a basic staple of the Internet where information is created, shared, modified, "flamed", praised, and so on, every day. What will continue, is the erosion we have witnessed in this century of the book's dominance and centrality. With every passing month, it is becoming more important to identify and evaluate electronic forms of information in order to provide meaningful, balanced collections for public consumption. This process is essentially one that libraries and librarians have been engaged in for decades.

To be successful I think public libraries have to try to develop new services, to provide new resources, and to alter the public perception that libraries are mostly old-fashioned print warehouses that predate the modern era. To position the library more firmly in the mainstream, I think its crucial for public libraries to do five things during the next five years.

First, libraries have to employ the power of information

technology by emphasizing new roles in their public services. The communications revolution is an important feature of society. Libraries must continue to offer the latest features of telecommunications that integrate sound, text, data, and images. This effort will entail budgetary decisions, and, in a climate of restraint and cutback, lead to the reallocation of declining budgetary resources. Success in the area of technical services that people do not clearly observe will no longer suffice. As a start, computer workstations should be introduced as public resources where word processing, e-mail functions, electronic newsgroups, cd-roms, and worldwide Internet access are standard services. After all, the public library is a learning centre where many different resources should be utilized. One can easily envisage right now that older newspaper reading areas characterized by tables and racks will be replaced with state-of-the-art computer terminals that can access hundreds of daily newspapers across North America. The same is true, to a lesser extent, for magazine reading areas: a number of traditional general or specialized periodicals, like Macleans, are now available on a subscription basis in electronic forms. Using software programs, either newspaper stories or magazine articles can be downloaded to disk or printed on paper at workstations on demand, thereby shifting the library's focus to immediate service demands away from the time-honoured collection of on-site materials.

Second, partnerships with other organizations have to be developed in the rapidly expanding information universe. The development of regional/metropolitan freenets which permit toll-free access to the Internet across the province is a good case in point. Libraries must at the very least get their catalogues on local electronic freenets and they should try to play a leadership role in developing local community networks. Librarians have many opportunities to draw on their experience and proficiency in this process. They can select information resources, design user interfaces, or help promote the organization of community information on these networks. Libraries and librarians need to participate in network initiatives by allowing access to library catalogues around the world and by developing WWW servers

with navigational aids that allow people to find or discover information resources. Across the province, local networks are in a state of development, e.g. London's homepage efforts and Ottawa's national capital freenet. To date, a number of Ontario libraries (small and large) are responding by developing Internet access and establishing their presence as an information provider.

Third, libraries must strive to promote the concept of end-user empowerment, that is to link people with information without an intermediary. Ideally, the idea is to provide an alternative to visiting the library by permitting users to locate and control their own information at their own convenience from home or office on a time basis outside the traditional 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. The creation of virtual reference libraries with encyclopedias, dictionaries, atlases, indexes and abstracts that people can access from outside the library is the next step in the evolution (revolution?) of reference services. But to achieve this goal, librarians need to impart their skills developed over the past decade or so. Finding information on an information highway is not as easy as it seems: people need direction, training, and skillsets. Frequently, the assistance of an intermediary--such as a librarian--will be required. Electronic information retrieval requires what many retrieval experts have termed recall and precision. Recall is the amount of relevant material a searcher finds, usually 50-75% of what is actually available. Precision is the number of relevant items from a particular search that a user decides to use, usually 50-80% of what was originally located. Obviously, it is easy to see that many searches will produce less than half of what is actually pertinent to a subject search and that searching can become a frustrating activity. Librarians certainly can help information seekers overcome these obstacles.

Fourth, libraries have to dramatically broaden the range of electronic services. It is just not a matter of collecting electronic files. The day is over when library staff can feel comfortable offering an array of print or electronic resources housed in a central library or community branches. The traditional meaning of circulation as it pertains to libraries is changing and this

concept has to be rethought. The twentieth-first century electronic library we have heard about should provide access to a vast range of resources and service providers anywhere in the world. It is not necessary to have news from newspapers that are incorporating more analytical and journalistic pieces to retain readership. If you want news from Australia, you can go on the World Wide Web and connect with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. A few people can do this from home now: in fact, according to Statistics Canada, Ontario has a growing number of people owning home computers with modems in Canada. Granted that this percentage is just under fifteen percent and there is a fundamental restriction--they have the know the information resource exists.

Another future service possibility is to have people login to a local library by computer from their homes or offices and "chat" with staff as they do on Internet Relay Chat channels around the world or fill in an electronic form, post it in an electronic mailbox and receive a response from the library about some specific query, say the status of a previous request or the whereabouts of a circulating item. This organizational response is not as easy as it seems but it is a key area where libraries can play a vital role in providing an environment where research, study, and learning can flourish.

Finally, an image problem needs to be addressed. Libraries need to reimage themselves as important learning organizations where services continually change and improve. Too often, people consider the local public library as a recreational resource and the educational or informational role is secondary or overlooked altogether. If libraries are to continue to receive tax funding from municipal and provincial governments, they will have to rethink their traditional mainstay, the circulating collection. The concept of reading is changing: the cultural weight is more on visual/factual information in a variety of formats and less on reflective/entertaining book-oriented activity. Although books account for less than five percent of what is printed on an annual basis--newspapers, magazines, brochures, etc. account for the vast majority of "printed" sources--most space in libraries is

allocated to books. Is it any wonder that the library is perceived to be a "book place" even though audio-visual departments have impressive collections and network structures to deliver off-site resources? This public perception needs to change, something I feel we are trying to do here today.

Already, some steps are being taken in this province to develop libraries as learning centres in a broad sense. Industry Canada's Schoolnet Community Access Project announced in February 1995 that it intends to offer rural communities affordable public access to information resources on the Internet by creating a national network of community access sites. The plan includes libraries. As well, the government of Ontario information is now available on-line in over two hundred public libraries with details about different ministry services, the location of government offices, MPP's addresses, and Ontario's parliamentary system. The idea of an electronic learning centre--the electronic library--needs to be integrated with the library's long-standing commitment to literacy and educational and recreational resources. The library is an important institution for improving literacy skills and helping understand and use information in different formats such as printed texts and computer files.

Taken together, none of these points is a remarkable new starting point. People have been saying libraries need to stress educational services for years, this is why book reading clubs and readers' advisory services were popular in libraries as long ago as the 1920s. Information technology is not new, what is new is the pace of change. Access to resources at a distance is a challenge that interlibrary loan departments have been grappling with for decades. End-user empowerment is essentially newfangled terminology for explaining why free public library services have existed for a hundred years. To say that libraries should help people help themselves is to revisit the age of Victoria when Samuel Smiles wrote a best seller, *Self-Help*, in 1859. Partnerships are not of recent origin; libraries have been cooperating with community groups for decades. It is the groups that are new.

To conclude, we need to acknowledge that there is work to be done if Library Week is to continue as a relevant occasion in Ontario. Fortunately, technology offers the library a chance to preserve and enlarge its role in providing access to resources in different types of formats. While it is always difficult to predict the future, it appears that public libraries are well-positioned to exploit information technology and interact with their communities and users in meaningful ways. I for one, anyway, think that the foundation public libraries have laid is such that continued growth is highly likely. Free access to information and educational/recreational services has been their business for more than a century and it seems that another hundred years is not out of the question.

NOTES

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Joel Swerdlow, "Information Revolution," *National Geographic Magazine* 188, 4 (Oct. 1995): 5-27

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Monday, August 28, 2017

Louise Riley and Jack Brown Theses on Schools and Public Libraries during WW II

Mutual Relationships between Public Libraries and Schools in Providing Library Service to Boys and Girls in Canadian Cities (Columbia University, M.A. thesis, June 1942, 113 p. with tables) by Margaret Louise Riley and ***The Extension of Public and School Library Services in the Province of Alberta*** (University of Chicago, M.A. thesis, August 1940, 161 p. with tables and map) by Jack Ernest Brown.

Margaret Louise Riley was born in Calgary and educated there at St. Hilda's High School for Girls. She attended McGill University and received her library diploma at Madison, Wisconsin in 1928. After graduation, she worked at the Calgary Public Library as a children's librarian throughout the 1930s. Riley's articles on library work for children and teens helped her attain a Carnegie Fellowship and she graduated from Columbia University Library School in 1942. Her thesis, ***Mutual Relationships***, dealt with the subject of cooperative work by school and public libraries in Canada and contains many insightful details about the standing of Canadian school librarianship in the early 1940s.

Jack Ernest Brown was born in Edmonton in 1914 and graduated from the University of Alberta with a B.A. in 1938. He attended McGill University Library School, receiving a B.L.S. in the following year. Brown was awarded a Carnegie Fellowship and graduated with a MA from the University of Chicago Graduate Library School in 1940. His thesis focused on the development and administration of public and school library services in Alberta but is seldom referenced.

Children's librarianship was a well-established public library service by 1930. Louise Riley introduced a room for young adult readers and enthusiastically improved Calgary's children's library at a time when money was hard to come by during the Depression years. It was during the 1930s when schools in Alberta, and elsewhere in Canada, began to develop a "new program" in elementary and junior high schools that emphasized the use of many books rather than rote learning and use of one class text. Because many elementary school libraries were deficient (or practically non-existent), students and parents often turned to public libraries to secure good reading. This practical consideration inspired Riley to research cooperative educational efforts between schools and public libraries. At the same, she became known for her story hours broadcast on the city's local radio station. Her thesis at Columbia examined the relationships that were being developed in Canadian cities with more than 10,000 population (52 in total) through the use of questionnaires and a literature search of leading professional opinions about school-public library cooperation.

Riley's detailed compilation and analysis of statistics received from across Canada yielded useful information about the state of children's work in 1940. For example, larger city public libraries were open for children on average from 20-40 hours per week and the average number of books per registered child ranged from 1.5 to 2.2 books/borrower. Fifteen school boards were developing centralized school libraries, an option many library planners favoured, especially in the United States where Riley was working on her master's thesis. Data on classroom libraries, children's sections in public libraries, and public library branches in schools were included. There were twenty-six tables in all.

Mutual Relationships explored solutions for cooperative efforts to improve children's work. Riley surveyed the experience of American and English libraries and presented the advantages and disadvantages of similar Canadian efforts especially inter-board

representation on school and library boards, public library branches in schools, and cooperative administration of school libraries. Often, the crucial element missing was leadership at the local level. Based on her findings, Riley recommended conducting local community surveys and devising a cooperative plan for discussion and eventual implementation. She suggested the newly formed Canadian Association of Children's Librarians (1939) and Canadian Library Council (1941) could provide assistance in developing cooperative work.

Riley's conclusions did not surprise many informed librarians and administrators. However, the data she presented was the first Canadian study of its kind that buttressed many arguments about school-public library cooperation. It was another instance of the use of social science methodology to study libraries and demonstrate the value of "library science." Of course, ***Mutual Relationships*** was confined to cities--smaller communities, rural places, counties, and regions were not included. The thesis was a practical exploration of an issue that would continue throughout the 20th century and be resolved locally in many different ways.

Louise Riley returned to Calgary Public Library to develop children's services after graduation. One successful effort was the establishment of general reading sections with visiting librarians to advise student readers in some schools which was financed by school board grants. She became Calgary's Assistant Librarian in 1949, served as President of the Alberta Library Association, taught courses for children's librarianship for teachers at the Calgary campus of the University of Alberta, and authored an award-winning children's book, *Train for Tiger Lily* (1954). Louise Riley died in 1957 and shortly afterward a new branch library in Hounsfield Heights was named in her honour.

Jack Brown's thesis at Chicago was centered on Alberta where about sixty percent of the population lived in rural conditions. A plan for the extension of library services through schools and

public libraries based on governmental, economic, educational and social conditions was his primary aim. He made a lengthy study of Alberta's geography, its educational system, municipal and school authorities, and economic conditions. It was a time when Edmonton and Calgary were small cities under 100,000 population and when agriculture and cattle ranching were dominant economic activities.

Brown applied the concepts of 'modern service' and 'efficiency' to Alberta's library scene in a thorough manner by stressing the educational role of public libraries and the development of regional systems. Brown surveyed the province's public libraries and found that only 30.3% of the total population of 772,782 were served by libraries and only 8% were actually registered borrowers. Half of Alberta's book stock resided in Edmonton and Calgary and the per capita expenditure on libraries based on total provincial population was fifteen cents. School libraries were at a rudimentary level. Larger school divisions held the promise of better funding but these were only in the initial stages of development. One successful venture was the small travelling libraries and 'open shelf' system operated by the University of Alberta's Extension Department.

Brown concluded that the existing public library 'system' was completely inadequate and suggested that cooperation between rural sections and urban communities should be adopted and promoted by an independent appointed provincial library agency. He strengthened this argument by reviewing British Columbia's pioneering effort in the Fraser Valley as well as American library organization in Vermont where regional services were introduced on a voluntary basis during the Depression. Brown was particularly impressed by work in California where county library systems and city libraries were supervised by the State Library. By 1940, California's system of county libraries and city libraries had reached 98 per cent of the state's population and had been adopted by many other American states. Brown also

provided a brief account of the coordinated system of rural and larger centralized libraries in Denmark.

Using his findings, Brown adapted international library planning to suit Alberta's needs. To remedy the permissive nature of current library legislation, he suggested establishing an independent provincial library agency to supervise and coordinate an integrated public library and school library system based on larger units of service. Brown presented the idea of eleven districts each with a headquarters and branches, a reasonable tax base, populations in excess of 20,000, and areas ranging from 3,000 to 6,000 square miles to minimize the problem of distance. He knew that his divisions were personal decisions, not necessarily ones that a potential provincial agency and new library director might implement. However, Brown stated "If a public library system were established in each of the eleven regions, then approximately 80 per cent of Alberta's population would receive public library services (p. 154)." His specific recommendations, which were shared by other Alberta librarians, were never put into action; however, an Alberta Library Board was formed in 1946 and eventually, after passage of a new library act in 1956, the process of establishing regional libraries began, first in the Lacombe (now Parkland) regional library and area similar to Brown's "District 2" centered in Red Deer.

Jack Brown returned to Edmonton Public Library after graduation, establishing the popular street car branch library that was publicized in the January 1942 issue of *Library Journal*. Shortly thereafter, Brown left to work at the New York Public Library until 1957 when he returned to Canada as chief librarian with the National Research Council in Ottawa. At the NRC, Brown oversaw the development of a National Science Library for Canada in the 1960s and in October 1974 a new library building opened with a new title: the Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information. He retired from CISTI in

1978 at a time when a national information system had become a practical reality. Jack Brown passed away in 1996.

The two theses by Louise Riley and Jack Brown were completed when Canada was at war—not a reasonable time to expect any action to result from their publication. However, ***Mutual Relationships*** and ***The Extension of Public and School Library Services*** marked another step in the direction of the application of more rigorous scholarship to Canadian library issues and planning that had begun in the late 1930s. As well, they both recognized that public library work and school libraries were closely linked, a plan adopted from British practice that would eventually be supplanted after 1945 by the American system of independent school libraries that were the responsibility of educational agencies and local boards of education.

Further Information

View the 1942 Paramount Pictures video of the [Edmonton's Street Car Library](#) on the Internet Archive.

Read about Margaret Louise Riley's career in the [Ex Libris Association](#).

Read about Jack Brown's career at the [Ex Libris Association](#)

The development of school libraries in Canada shortly after 1945 is the subject of my blog [at this link](#).

Monday, April 24, 2017

***Canada Needs Libraries* by the Canadian Library Council, 1945**

Canada Needs Libraries. Published by Canadian Library Council, 1945. 45 p. Includes briefs and articles by the CLC, librarians, and seven provinces regarding library needs of Canadians in the postwar period. Reprinted from ***Ontario Library Review***, November, 1944.

Towards the end of the Second World War, efforts began across Canada to return to a peacetime economy and society. The federal government established a Department of Reconstruction in 1944 under the direction of a powerful cabinet minister, Clarence Decator Howe, to provide general direction. Provincial governments also established agencies to examine reconstruction or rehabilitation activities. Both levels of government conducted hearings and encouraged public participation in this process. It was an opportunity for library associations and libraries to recommend a way forward to better serve the public after years of depression and wartime conditions. The most energetic group in this regard was the Canadian Library Council, Inc., (CLC) formed in 1941 to coordinate national library activities.

Throughout 1944-45, the CLC and provincial library associations created briefs to present their views on library development in the immediate postwar period. More than half of Canada's population did not have direct access to public libraries, especially in rural areas. There was no national library. Some provinces did not have public library legislation. These were serious deficiencies that the CLC and its partner associations sought to remedy with a series of presentations and documents to federal and provincial agencies outlining the arguments and information for improved library services. All these submissions

took place within a short span of time and, in some cases, formed the basis of postwar library development into the 1950s.

However, in Canada's library history these statements are, for the most part, rarely examined or cited today. Yet, at the time, they were essential for planning purposes. In fact, the CLC gathered these reports, briefs, and summaries and published them in 1945, leaving an important record of Canadian library reconstruction views at the conclusion of WW II.

Canada Needs Libraries was a short pamphlet composed of statements collected from seven provincial associations, the CLC itself, and two articles from leading figures in the CLC, Nora Bateson and Elizabeth Defoe. The briefs were originally published in the ***Ontario Library Review*** in November 1944. These short statements remain worthwhile reading today:

- Library Service for Canada; a brief prepared by the Canadian Library Council [July 1944] with Appendices and "Rural Canada Needs Libraries" (Bateson) and "A National Library" (Dafoe).
- Library Provision and Needs for Nova Scotia: brief to the Royal Commission on Post-war Rehabilitation in Nova Scotia, 1943 [by Regional Library Commission of NS]
- Proposals Concerning Library Service in the Province of Quebec as outlined by a Special Committee of the Quebec Library Association
- Library Needs of the Province of Ontario: a brief on needs prepared by the Reconstruction Committee of the Ontario Library Association, 1944
- Post-war Library Service in Manitoba; a brief submitted by the Manitoba Library Association to the Committee on Post-War Reconstruction [Manitoba].

- Post-war Library Service for Saskatchewan; a brief presented to the Saskatchewan Reconstruction Council on behalf of the Saskatchewan Library Association, 1944
- An Extension Programme for Alberta Public Libraries, by Alexander Calhoun [Calgary]
- A Brief on Post-war Library Service for British Columbia presented to the Post-war Rehabilitation Council by the British Columbia Library Association
- Memorandum from [BC] Public Library Commission to Post-war Rehabilitation Council

All the submissions dealt with issues that hindered library development. The main brief from CLC, *Library Service for Canada*, was sent to the federal government's Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment in August 1944 (the Turgeon Committee). It made the case to develop library services in rural Canada by means of regional library service. It also proposed the formation of a national Library Resources Board "to guide, co-ordinate, and encourage provincial, local and special efforts." An initial focus for this Board would be a survey of existing library resources used by the armed forces. With this information and collection of provincial data, the Board, using federal funds under its control, could provide incentive grants for regional libraries and devise a system of co-operative use of library resources: necessities such as a National Library Service, library standards, and library consultation services (e.g., legislation, book tariffs, and postal rates). The idea of a national Board to coordinate library work was a bold idea but in keeping with the sweeping powers the federal government had assumed during wartime.

Much of the work of the national advisory Library Resources Board could be furthered by assistance from provincial library associations and groups working in the field of adult education or teaching. In this scheme of thinking, a National Library was

also essential: it could develop collections of national literature and history, provide national reference resources, compile a national union catalog to enable inter-library loan across the country, and produce bibliographical publications about Canada or indexes of publications. By providing leadership through the creation of library standards, and advisory services, the Library Resources Board could spur library expansion. In conjunction with provincial briefs the CLC's postwar rebuilding vision could advance the nation's "intelligence, character, economic advancement, and cultural life." Library Reconstruction plans at all government levels would confer benefits for all Canada's citizens and lead to a better, more informed society.

Subsequent events at the national level dispelled many of the hopes of library planners. Following the failure to reach agreements at the Dominion-Provincial Conference on Reconstruction in August 1945, events took a new turn. C.D. Howe was determined to focus on converting existing factories producing munitions and war equipment to consumer and industrial products. Howe, a powerful minister with Prime Minister Mackenzie King's support, preferred common sense industrial re-conversion and free enterprise rather than abstract social plans authored by Reconstruction advocates and groups, such as the CLC.

Nonetheless, the CLC, and its successor, the Canadian Library Association (CLA), did not abandon many of its ideas and strategies developed during the war. The CLA itself could perform some of the tasks that had been proposed for the Library Resources Board, although federal funding would not be forthcoming, and forming a National Library became a postwar priority with CLA. The new Canadian Library body built on ***Canada Needs Libraries*** and, in concert with other national organizations, submitted an important brief (***A National Library for Canada***) in December 1946 that stated the case for a National Library that ultimately led to its legislative creation in 1953. Promotion of regional services also ranked high on CLA's list, but, more importantly, provincial library organizations became lynchpins in advocating for regional library legislation.

It was these organizations that pursued governments to establish survey committees and reports on public library service in the provinces through the 1940s and 1950s.

In Canada's provinces, the growth of public library services was stimulated by new legislation and policies. In Saskatchewan, in 1946, a Regional Libraries Act allowed for a Supervisor, Marion Gilroy (a CLC director from 1945-46) to encourage the development of larger units of service. This led to the formation of its first regional library in north central Saskatchewan. In Ontario, postwar regulations led to better conditional grants for libraries and certification of librarians to improve qualifications for personnel. Later, in 1947, an Act enabling formation of county library co-operatives was introduced, a legislative piece that elevated rural service in southern Ontario. In Nova Scotia, following the recommendations of a thorough 1947-48 survey of the province, the Annapolis Valley Regional Library became the first of many such libraries in 1949. In 1948, Manitoba passed a Public Libraries Act that enabled the establishment of public libraries in municipalities and of regional libraries. The Alberta Library Board, an advisory group to the Minister of Education, was established in 1946 with Alexander Calhoun as chairman. It renewed interest in organizing rural regional systems; however, Alberta's first regional system, Parkland, was not established until 1959, the same year that Quebec enacted its first law leading to the development of a provincial network of public libraries.

Together, these briefs illustrate the faith that library promoters held in what would now be called "facts-based evidence" for establishing government policy. Library surveys, data, research, collaborative submission of briefs, and participation of concerned citizens formed the basis of library advocacy. Many of the ideas in *Canada Needs Libraries* would drive the agenda of library associations and workers after 1945 to establish a fundamental organizational framework for service that we recognize in present library systems. Even the CLC's title remains relevant today: almost three-quarters of a century later, Canada still needs libraries.

Further Reading:

My previous blog in 2012, [The Case for a National Library of Canada, 1933–1946](#), outlines the 1946 joint library statement and subsequent events leading to the 1952 Act that created the National Library in 1953.

The brief by CLA and other national associations, *A National Library for Canada*, issued in 1946, is [the subject of another blog](#).

Thursday, April 06, 2017

Two 1940s Canadian Theses on Academic Libraries by Dorothy Hamilton and Winifred Snider

Dorothy I. Hamilton, *The Libraries of the Universities of Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. A Report*. (Ann Arbor: Department of Library Science, University of Michigan, 1942). 2, 2, 137 leaves with tables.

Winifred H. Snider, *Extramural Library Service in Libraries and Extension Departments of Canadian Universities*. MA thesis (New York: Columbia University Library School, 1948). 64 p. with tables.

Until the Second World War, it could be said with a measure of assurance that librarianship in Canada was dominated by interest in public library development. Libraries in higher education were mostly the reserve of an educated minority of Canadians. It was the public library that was known by the popular notion, the "people's university." There were, of course, occasions when academic librarians, such as Stewart Wallace, Gerhard Lomer, and Kaye Lamb, rose to prominence in provincial organizations during the Depression. And, in the early 1930s, the Commission of Enquiry had explored universities to some degree. These episodes, for the most part, were short lived. However, the long slumber of university and college libraries on a national stage was about to change after 1939.

Two librarians, Dorothy Isabel Hamilton and Winifred Helen Snider, produced studies that provide valuable information on the state of university collections and services during the war and immediate postwar period. Hamilton was first into the field: a native British Columbian, she earned her BA at Alberta in 1929 and then went to the University of Washington for her BSLS in 1931. After working at the university library in Edmonton in the

1930s she was awarded a Carnegie grant for an ALA fellowship in 1941 to complete her AMLS at Michigan on four Canadian western university libraries. Winifred Snider came from a prominent family in the Kitchener-Waterloo region. Like many young women in Ontario, she went to Victoria College, and graduated with a BA in 1923. After holding various positions, she went to the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn for a Library Diploma (1928) and worked briefly in the Fraser Valley regional demonstration at Chilliwack, BC, before taking up cataloging at Waterloo College [now Wilfrid Laurier University] in 1932. She left shortly afterward to be the assistant librarian at Mount Allison from 1934-42, taking time to be president of the Maritime Library Association (1940-41). In 1942, she became the university's head librarian until the end of WW II when she resigned to work and study at Columbia University where she earned her MSLS in 1948.

Dorothy Hamilton, University of Alberta

These two theses are valuable records of academic library work in the 1940s. In the first part of her work, Dorothy Hamilton briefly considered how higher education developed at each western university: Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. In the second part of her thesis, Hamilton looked at several aspects of library development on each campus prior to WW II:

- the historical development of libraries and their accommodations;
- an examination of library finances, financial standards, and a comparison with eight American universities;
- the legal basis of the library in university acts, and the status of library committees and the head librarian;
- the general management of the library and its staff resources and activities;
- book collections in relation to checklists and special collections;
- services: circulation, user regulations, hours of operation, interloan, reference, and reserve work.

Generally, there was room for improvement. At one point, Hamilton concluded that "Unfortunately, Canadian university administrators do not seem to be aware of the importance of the library in university instruction." (p. 45) Her lengthy exposition of the role of librarians, frugal budgets, and smallish collections helped to fortify this opinion in all areas, but we must remember throughout the Great Depression managerial thinking leaned to making ends meet.



UBC main library, 1932

One solution for improvement that Hamilton pointed to was the use of emerging college and university library standards by the American Library Association (ALA), recommended guidelines or principles by American librarians, and new

accreditation processes of the North Central Association used in the United States. Hamilton used ALA statistics to compare the four Canadian universities were similar counterparts south of the border (e.g., Arizona, Colgate, Wyoming, Southern Methodist, etc.) rather than the usual parade of the highest ranking American universities with budgets and operations far beyond the expectations of Canadian faculty or librarians. In this regard, British Columbia did fairly well and the other three western libraries were inadequately supported. Hamilton also reviewed book, reference, and periodical collections using checklists for American college libraries developed by the North Central Association which had begun accrediting colleges before WW I. Again, the percentage holdings in relation to these checklists found British Columbia doing reasonably well with the other three universities mostly clustered in the median range or lower range.

Hamilton also explored services and personnel. In many cases, services (e.g., library instruction) were less developed or were reliant on manual procedures (e.g. circulation). Professional

librarians, often in short supply, were regarded as "clerks" by most faculty. On balance, western Canadian university libraries in the early 1940s could best be described as being in the developmental stage. Hamilton concluded her analysis with the observation that all the universities required (1) a good central building; (2) a readjustment of the university budget to provide adequate support; and (3) increased staffing with adjustments as to status and salaries to attain at least minimum standards. The contemporary guidelines, of course, were American--it would not be until 1965 that the ***Guide to Canadian University Library Standards*** published by the Canadian Library Association appeared. Hamilton's exploration confirmed the need to improve services but her report was seldom referenced. After graduating at Michigan, Dorothy Hamilton returned to Alberta and worked at the library in public service areas, including head of reference, until 1969. She died in Victoria, BC, in 1974.

Winifred Snyder, Mount Allison University

Winifred Snider's thesis at Columbia was less extensive than Hamilton's work and was descriptive rather than analytical. But she chose a subject, extramural library services, that was national in focus and included university extension departments that mostly organized these services and relied on library support. Snider worked under the general mantra of Reconstruction in the postwar period and aimed to provide information for a national plan of library service to rural Canada to which university libraries could contribute. Since the inception of McGill's McLennan Travelling Libraries to smaller Canadian communities in 1901, university libraries had participated in a sporadic manner to a wide range of adult education activities in rural and remote areas. ***Extramural Library Service*** studied thirteen universities that offered a wide variety of extramural public services. A few libraries were active participants, others provided limited support for the work of extension departments. British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Toronto, Queen's, Western, Ottawa, McGill, Laval, Acadia, St. Francis Xavier, Mount Allison, and New Brunswick all participated in Snider's survey. Of these, Manitoba, Acadia, and New Brunswick did not

have extension departments.

Essentially, in the immediate postwar era, two main types of programming had evolved in Canadian universities. One grouping was course related--night classes in urban areas, correspondence courses, regular extension lectures for a short period, and summer schools. Mostly, academic credit was offered for advancement. McGill, Toronto, and Queen's were important in this regard. A second grouping of programs revolved around responses to the interests of users anxious to learn on their own or develop knowledge and skills related to local activities. Snider's definition for "extramural" emphasized this cultural work: she focused on library services to people who were not faculty, students, or staff attending university sessional classes. This perspective involved programming with reading clubs, handicrafts, films, debates, summer camps, music, commerce, entertainments and sports, short conferences and discussions for like-minded groups. In the east, St. Francis Xavier's Department of Extension was nationally recognized for its correspondence courses and lecture program especially on Cape Breton Island where branch libraries were established to support small, organized groups in a cooperative effort. To the west, the University of Alberta extension service was an acknowledged leader supported with a large library managed by its extension department. Also, British Columbia was an important source for provincial adult education and extramural work.

For academic libraries, providing resources for all these types of programs was a challenge. Snider's survey identified six main types of library borrowers--correspondence work, graduates, high school students, private individuals, formal library applicants, and clubs-study groups-community residents. For the most part, especially correspondence courses, there were specific requirements: "packet or package libraries" containing necessary reading and information were distributed to people and groups at a distance. Book lending was an ingredient in library activity, but not the major factor. But for the most part, extension work was not given priority in academic library work. Snider acknowledged her review presented an individualized portrait of

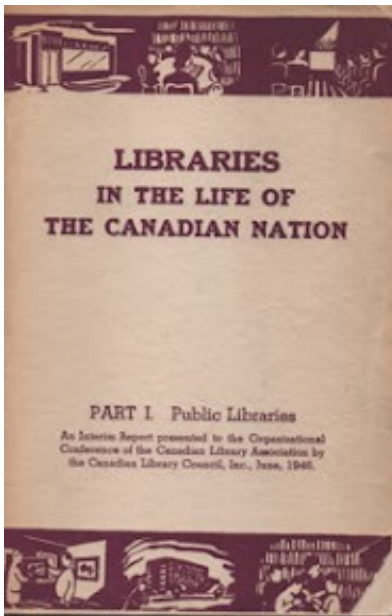
institutions on a national stage where policy development presented "a rather primitive state of service" (p. 43). In fact, over the next quarter-century, university travelling and package library services began to wind down as regional public library services improved and students consulted better resourced regional and small public libraries. This likely accounts for the rare references to Snider's thesis because no comprehensive, coordinated Canadian plan of library development for rural Canada was developed in the postwar period.

After Snider completed her graduate work, and with a quarter-century of library work behind her from coast to coast in two countries, she left Columbia to return to Ontario to care for her father after her mother's death. She and her sister, Lillian (a teacher), became fixtures in local community life and heritage to the north of Kitchener. Winifred Snider died in 1994.

Saturday, December 17, 2016

Libraries in the Life of the Canadian Nation **by Canadian Library Council, 1946**

Libraries in the Life of the Canadian Nation. Part I, Public Libraries: An Interim Report Presented to the Organizational Conference of the Canadian Library Association by the Canadian Library Council, Inc., June, 1946. Canadian Library Council, 107 p.



Libraries in the Life of the Canadian Nation, pointed the way to postwar planning by cooperatively planning services on a regional basis in many rural areas where there were no libraries or by federating small services (especially the ubiquitous 'association public library') that could not develop effective, expanded, progressive library services.

The CLC had been formed to create a Canadian library association across the nation, a bilingual organization that would proselytize a course of action to develop library services and advocate for a National Library in Ottawa. To this end, its small, capable executive, led by Margaret Gill from the National Research Council, Ottawa, organized a national meeting at McMaster University in June 1946 to rally librarians, trustees, administrators, adult educators, school authorities, and anyone interested in books and media.

We meet in Hamilton in June, 1946, to consider 'libraries in the life of the Canadian nation' at a conference called to organize a Canadian Library Association [CLA]. It is to be hoped that from the decisions of this gathering will come a policy of realistic and courageous nation-wide promotion of effective library service through public, university, school, special and government libraries, not overlooking the establishment of a national library.

Libraries in the Life of the Canadian Nation provided the basis for the newly minted CLA to advance its ideas in briefs to provincial and federal governments in the immediate years after 1945. Today, many decades later, the report's information serves to remind us that libraries were present in their communities in many ways through community cooperation in the first part of the 20th century. The range of groups allied with libraries was diverse and extensive. The types of services, of course, depended on local funding, donations, or limited provincial grants. A small sample of the report's replies gives an impression of the state of public library service and interaction with community life and agencies from west to east:

New Westminster: "The University Women's Club has, for a number of years, donated about \$30.00 worth of books to the Boys' and Girls' Department. Of recent years this gift has been to the Young Moderns' Alcove. The books are chosen by the Children's Librarian and bear a special book plate."

Calgary: ". . . has its teen-age groups divided into 2 sections, Junior High School and Senior High School or Young Adults. There is a librarian in charge of the library work with this first section who spends full time on the work. Grades 7 to 9 are served--they have a separate room know as the John Buchan Room. A librarian spends part-time on the work with the young adults, grades 10 to 12. This section has an alcove in the circulation department know as "The Corral."

Regina: "... provides information, catalogues, etc., about education and documentary film: it also provides loan of films but not preview facilities. Films as part of the regular library programme is used for special subject display. The library provides collections of photographs, but not of lantern slides, films strips, photostats or microfilm. The library does not have a reading machine or a film projector. Copies of its materials are provided by typescript."

Manitoba libraries under 5,000 population: "Only 1 (Gimli Icelandic Library) is housed in a separate building. 1 has a room (125 feet of shelf space) in the post office and Red Cross building. ... 6 are in need of larger quarters. Kenton, Gypsumville and Shoal Lake hope to build community halls (the latter 2 as [war] memorials) which will house the library. Langruth hopes to have a municipal building in which the library will be located. Neepawa has plans to take over the room used by the Red Cross when that organization finishes with it."

Toronto: "Two radio programmes. 'Stories for You'--Sundays, 5 o'clock, CJBC, since Jan. 1945. 'Junior Story Period'--sponsored by Dept. of Education, during Fall terms, 1944, 1945. 'One of our most rapidly growing projects is our service to parents of pre-school age children. Hundred of parents take advantage of this service every week.'

Toronto Beaches branch: "An active drama organization. Professional and student concerts. Co-operation in the field of music."

Montreal Children's Library: "... public relations--talks, articles, radio programmes, displays, etc.--have been an important part of the work of Committee and Librarian in an effort to make citizens more conscious of the value of libraries and their lack in this city. We were started as a 'demonstration'."

Moncton and Saint John: "Both have a Friends of the Library

group and Saint John has held open house for the community." . . . Both have a separate reference room, but neither has a reference librarian. Saint John has the following specialized collections: Loyalist biographical material; local and provincial history in scrapbook form; Maritime history in manuscript (typewritten)."

Reserve Mines: "This is a small library mainly supported by our Co-operative Institutions--with a modern equipped School Library branch in the school building. The librarian is a graduate in Library Science. . . . [this library supplies books to] Women's Institutes, Farm Forum Groups, Citizen's Forum Groups, Labor groups, church groups, study clubs, adult education groups."

Prince Edward Island Libraries: ". . . serves 23 community libraries, 4 deposit stations (56 collections loaned to Women's Institutions or community groups during 1945) and 272 schools. They do not give book van service. The library is housed in 3 rooms in Prince of Wales College, Charlottetown. . . . The headquarters library selects and purchases all books and catalogues them. It maintains a central deposit of books to answer reference questions and to supply special requests. . . . Headquarters library assistance with community activities: loan service to [several groups]; talks on the library; book displays at various meetings."

Libraries in the Life of the Canadian Nation documented proactive library work that was happening on a sporadic basis across the country at the end of WW II and it showed what additional roles libraries could play with better organization and financial support. In many ways, the data in this report supported the ideas about library development recommended by the 1933 Commission of Enquiry. Unlike the previous report, issued in the depths of the Great Depression, ***Libraries*** appeared during improved national economic circumstances, and, even more importantly, it could be used by the newly formed Canadian Library Association to assert its ideas and plans for the future growth of

libraries.

Further reading on the Canadian Library Council:

Library Service for Canada: A Brief Prepared by the Canadian Library Council as Forwarded August 2, 1944 to the House of Commons

Nora Bateson, [Rural Canada Needs Libraries](#) (S.l.: Canadian Library Council, 1944) [PDF download]

Friday, October 21, 2016

The Carnegie Corporation Advisory Group on Canadian College Libraries, 1930–35

The history of Canadian university and college libraries remains an understudied subject. To be sure, the "golden age" of rapid expansion of facilities and progressive professional development after 1960 has attracted attention. But, despite decades of interaction between Canada's educated elite (students,



administrators, and faculty) and campus libraries and librarians, the period prior to 1960 is mostly the record of individual librarians (usually directors), iconic buildings (e.g., the

Douglas Library at Queen's University), and underdeveloped collections. In the general history of all Canadian libraries that emphasizes the public library movement, the Carnegie building program between 1900-25, regional library growth after the 1930s, the postwar formation of the Canadian Library Association (1946) and establishment of the National Library (1953), and the dramatic contrast between library development in Quebec and English-speaking provinces, there seem to be no major events or themes of similar consequence pertaining to libraries in higher education.

In the legacy of Carnegie philanthropy, too, colleges and universities reside outside the usual historiographical library tradition. For example, there was only one Canadian library, Victoria in Toronto, that benefited from Carnegie building grants

for university libraries prior to World War I. However, there is one significant period when the Carnegie Corporation of New York contributed significantly to the development of Canadian university and college libraries. During the Great Depression (1932 to 1935), 34 libraries in institutions of higher education shared in book grants totaling \$214,800 (approximately \$4,000,00 in 2016) as a result of a national (Canada and Newfoundland) examination conducted by an advisory group established by the Corporation. The ways in which the Canadian Advisory Group investigated and inspected potential recipients, evaluated whether they complied with conditions set, and distributed grants typically followed the policies and procedures established by an earlier American Advisory Group funded by the Corporation. Carnegie and university records document how financial aid was awarded and directed to the advancement of undergraduate print collections. Our sources can also be used to study the Canadian group in relation to the role of American philanthropic college library work, attempts by Canadian administrators to adapt library collections and organization to local circumstances, and trends in the improvement of undergraduate library services on a national scale.

You can read my article on this interesting (mostly unknown) story and its contribution to the development of Canadian libraries in higher education in the latest fall 2016 issue of [*Historical Studies in Education/Revue d'histoire de l'éducation*](#). *HSE* covers all aspects of education, from preschool to university education, informal and formal education, and methodological and historiographical issues.

The Carnegie book program was of short duration. For the first time on a national scale, it drew attention to the need to improve undergraduate library resources and elevate the status of the library in educational institutions. The book grants were tied to

the caliber of local library services and looked for a number of effects and results.

- to awaken university administrators to the potential of a good library;
- to provide books required for collateral reading in connection with the courses and materials faculty designated for their own instructional needs;
- to promote the library more as a service-oriented partner with faculty and less as a passive repository of books;
- to supply books for voluntary student reading and encouragement of their use;
- to employ professionally educated librarians to ensure that acquisitions could be easily accessible through proper cataloguing and classification systems;
- to promote wide-ranging book selection covering all fields of knowledge;
- to educate students in the use of library resources, thereby better integrating holdings with academic programs.

Of course, there were many different results across Canada. In a few cases, universities reorganized their libraries to more effectively serve students. New undergraduate reading areas (sometimes called junior divisions) were established to house new holdings. A few major careers, e.g. Marjorie Sherlock from Alberta, were begun with the book stimulus program. On the whole, for a period prior to the Second World War the Carnegie program fostered library development in different ways and heightened awareness of the library's potential to undertake new directions that had not previously been in evidence. After 1945, many universities and colleges would revisit the library ideas that were planted in the difficult Depression years.

For Canadian academic libraries in the 1940s, see my post on two Canadian theses [at this link](#).

Tuesday, October 11, 2016

Building Canadian Electronic Libraries: the Ontario Experience, 1960–2010

“Building Canadian Electronic Libraries: The Experience in Ontario Public Libraries, 1960-2010” by Lorne D. Bruce. Article published in *Libraries in the Early 21st Century. Volume 1, An International Perspective* [pp. 92-104], edited on behalf of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions by Dr. Ravindra N. Sharma. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter Saur, 2012.ix, 398 p.; ill.; map.

Years ago, shortly after the disastrous financial depression of 2008-09, I was asked to write about the Canadian experience with electronic libraries in the last half of the 20th century. There are few such studies in Canadian library history, but it was agreed that I would contribute a paper on Ontario's public library experience with automation, electronic-virtual-digital libraries, and ‘Library 2.0.’ Of course, a provincial outline must incorporate national and international technological developments. I tried to balance my article within a chronological framework that would identify key trends, persons, groups, and technical developments. But the ‘whole story’ of Canadian library technical advances (and setbacks) remains to be researched, documented, and published. A short article of fifteen pages must focus on the main issues and events in relation to one province, Ontario, and one sector, public libraries.

The general editor for this undertaking by IFLA, Dr. Ravinda Sharma, who was Dean of the Monmouth University Library at this time, strove to gather and convey the different approaches many countries have taken to achieve electronic library proficiency, a difficult task indeed. The first volume (2012) represented the history and development of library work of developed nations and the developing world chapter by chapter. A second volume followed, one covering additional countries

describing the modern history, development of libraries and library technology. The two volumes are a good source for international librarianship and comparative history.



Toronto Public Library bibliographic centre, 1968

The development of electronic processing and digital services in Ontario's public libraries for half a century began slowly in the postwar period. By 1960, visionary concepts were beginning to coalesce into practical solutions. Toronto Public Library, under the leadership of H.C. Campbell, was particularly active in thinking about applying new technology to in-house work, especially technical processing. At a national level, the National Library and Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information were prominent exponents of computerized applications and potential networking in the 1970s. For public libraries in general, the establishment of a Network Development Office in Toronto, funded by the province, marked an important step in the move towards cooperative planning in regions and in the province shortly before 1980.

Less than a decade later, the province of Ontario funded two major conferences--*Libraries 2000* and the *Electronic Library*--that may be regarded as idea-generating and synthesizing efforts at a time when 'second generation' computerized catalogs and information systems were being introduced into libraries. By the mid-1990s, library automation advanced rapidly with the development of the Information Highway (or World Wide Web)

and the profound influence of the Internet. Studies about the public library's capabilities (and liabilities) appeared frequently. Fears about the decline of the public library proved to be inaccurate as the service aspect (the virtual and later digital library) became more apparent to the public and library critics. Digital services could be interactive, not passive ways of using libraries, and a way of better connecting with local communities.

In the early years of the 21st century, the term 'Library 2.0' appeared. This appellation added a further layer of ideas about how libraries, now closely tied to the success of second generation web-based technologies, could serve clientele. Library 2.0 was concerned with user-centered change and client participation in the creation of content and an enhanced sense of community.

Over fifty years, Ontario's public libraries have been able to keep pace with technological developments during periods of fluctuating financial fortune. The prospect of multi-type library services and more collaborative networking with public libraries and university, college, and school libraries remains one area where Ontario's public-sector libraries could achieve future improvements.

More detail in my article on the development of electronic public libraries in Ontario from 1960–2010 is [at this link](#).

My blog on the Internet and digital libraries in Ontario is [at this link](#).

Bail Stuart-Stubbs, "Learning to Love the Computer: Canadian libraries and New Technology, 1945–1965," in *Readings in Canadian Library History* 2 ed. by Peter F. McNally, pp. 275–301 (Ottawa: Canadian Library Association, 1996).

Tuesday, August 23, 2016

A Survey of Montreal Library Facilities and a Proposed Plan for a Library System (1942) by Mary Duncan Carter

A Survey of Montreal Library Facilities and a Proposed Plan for a Library System by Mary Duncan (Colhoun) Carter, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1942. xi, 180 leaves, tables, maps.

In the early 1940s, Montreal's public library needs were only partially met by the 'big four:' the Civic Library, the Fraser Institute Library, the Mechanics' Institute Library, and the Westmount Public Library. Other libraries, the Children's Library, the Jewish People's Library, two dozen parish libraries operated by the Catholic Church, and a few special libraries also provided general reading. Compared to Toronto or cities of similar size in the United States--Cleveland, St. Louis, and Baltimore--there was no strong, centralized public library service. It was this particular circumstance that Mary Duncan Carter examined and sought to provide a coherent, systematic plan for metropolitan service in her 1942 dissertation.



Duncan Carter was no stranger to the Montreal situation. A native of St. Paul's, Minnesota, born in 1896, she joined the McGill library school as an assistant professor in 1927 after graduation from the University of Chicago with a Bachelor of Philosophy (1917) and then B.L.S. (1923) at the New York State Library School in Albany, which later becoming the Columbia University School of Library Service in 1926. She married the Canadian photographer and fine-art

dealer, Sidney Carter, in 1924, and taught at the McGill library school for ten years before leaving in 1937 to become the Director of the University of Southern California School of Library Science. Carter rose to prominence at USC and became President of the California Library Association in 1944.

Carter's thesis is a fascinating snapshot of libraries in Canada's metropolitan capital during the 1930s when statistics were available for various types of city libraries. In several chapters Carter reviewed the historical social conditions that underlay contemporary services, the resources available to Montrealers, and usage of a variety of libraries. Twenty-four parish libraries, operated by the Catholic Church, were studied in a separate chapter along with a case study of a special library at the Bell Telephone Company. Although there were an unusual number of rental libraries in Montreal during this period, Carter did not include them in her analysis of a 'public' system.

In 1933 the 'public library system' of Montreal (the four main public libraries) contained approximately 258,000 volumes. This figure was extremely small compared with public library holdings in cities of comparable size. There were 17,384 borrowers of the four main Montreal public libraries. Carter concluded

Perhaps the outstanding feature of the library pattern of Montreal is decentralization. Each of the four public libraries as well as each of the twenty-four parish libraries operates in complete independence and autonomy. Special libraries are by their very nature operated by and for separate groups. In Montreal certain special libraries, like those found in the Bell Telephone Company and the Royal Bank of Canada, even serve as general reading sources for industrial groups as well as sources for special technical material. (p.113)

Carter's plan for metropolitan service mostly worked within existing legislative constraints, e.g. in compliance with provincial and municipal laws and current administrative practices. She outlined three fundamental suggestions to provide

city-wide coordination.

1. to continue the present group of libraries with increased municipal aid by removing all restrictions on the use of the libraries (e.g., removal of membership fees for users and non-residents);
2. to develop the Civic Library to fulfill its function as a municipal tax-supported library of Montreal (e.g., establishing branches throughout the city);
3. to gradually integrate existing libraries with centralized administrative control (e.g., strengthening the collections of parish libraries).

Carter's blueprint for metropolitan service is too lengthy to elaborate in detail, but it included a variety of suggestions that seem, in retrospect, to have been possible to implement in the immediate post-1945 period in Montreal if municipal, church, and library officials could agree on its main points. The Fraser Library might serve as a central reference library; the Civic Library could extend its services through new service points; Westmount might serve as a model for unserved areas in Mount Royal and Outremont; cooperative centralized purchasing, classifying and cataloging of books could simplify technical procedures, reduce costs, and make possible a unified catalogue of city holdings. Carter felt that parish libraries might be incorporated in an overall system by having the Civic Library develop deposit collections acceptable to the Church that could be made available to parish libraries that were willing to develop their physical facilities to meet certain minimum standards.

To coordinate planning and operations, Carter proposed formation of a central authority, a Metropolitan Library Commission, to be composed of a delegate from each of the four main libraries, a Catholic representative to administer the parish plan, a provincially appointed member and a professional librarian appointed by the Quebec Library Association. Individual boards of the four libraries would continue to function and to decide matters relevant to the operation of each library within its functions in the overall library system. Commission

decisions pertaining to the entire system would then be better coordinated. Carter concluded optimistically, "there is reason to suppose that regional library cooperation entered into voluntarily by the existing public and parish libraries should not be difficult to accomplish." Regional libraries were already in operation in Canada and cooperative schemes were successful in reaching many unserved or underserved areas.

Duncan Carter's proposals for metropolitan library service were an important instance of planning in Canadian library history to improve services and provide more equitable access for the public. A summary 25-page version of her work was published in 1945 by the University of Chicago Graduate Library School. Like many potential planning documents, however, it was destined to gather dust and be forgotten in the course of time. Carter's subsequent career in the United States, at USC, as a cultural attaché with the US Embassy in Cairo, author and faculty member of library science at the University of Michigan (1956-66) removed her from ongoing activity in Montreal. The opportunity to explore regional cooperation passed as postwar priorities unfolded. She died in Pompano, Florida, in 1978.

The idea of metropolitan planning would reappear later in Toronto in the 1950s with the formation of a Council of Library Trustees of Toronto and District which hired Dr. Ralph Shaw to study the greater Toronto area in a landmark 1960 report, *Libraries of Metropolitan Toronto*.

The full text of Carter's thesis is available to download from the University of Chicago Library [at this link](#).

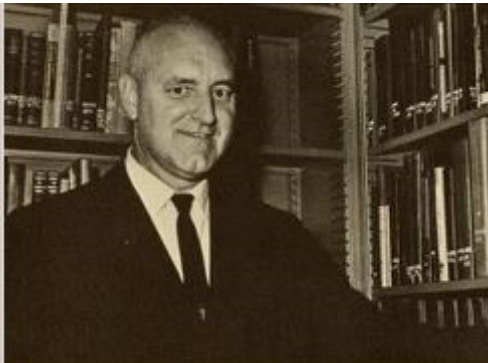
My blog on the Shaw study of Toronto in 1960 is [at this link](#)

Thursday, August 11, 2016

The Role of Canadian Public Libraries in Adult Education (1942) by Gordon Gourlay

The Role of Canadian Public Libraries in Adult Education, by J. W. Gordon Gourlay. University of Michigan, Department of Library Science, 1942. x, 153 leaves.

The studies of the 1930s on Canadian public libraries were mostly financed by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Very little funding came from government sources. In the 1940s, more academic degree studies on Canadian libraries begin to be conducted. Some of these were regional or local studies, others explored trends that extended across provincial boundaries. Adult education concerns had emerged as an important area for library work, first in the USA in the 1920s, then to Canada in the 1930s. William Carson, the Ontario Inspector of Public Libraries, had contributed a piece to an American Library Association study, *Libraries and Adult Education*, published in 1926. More than a decade later, the British Columbia Library Commission issued its *Preliminary Study of Adult Education in British Columbia, 1941*. Shortly after, in 1942, a national investigation appeared--one often bypassed in our library historiography.



John Wallace Gordon Gourlay, a native of Lancaster, Ontario, was the author. Gourlay (at left c.1965) had graduated from Queen's University with a B.A. in English, History, and

Economics in 1940. He went on to McGill to get a B.L.S. in 1941 and then to the University of Michigan to receive his A.M.L.S. in 1942. There were no master's library programs in Canada and Michigan's reputation attracted a number of Canadians at this time. Graduating during wartime, Gourlay enlisted and saw service in the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Royal Air Force during Second World War. He returned to civilian life as a librarian at three American universities before becoming the director at Clemson University Library from 1954 to his retirement in 1980. He died in South Carolina in 1991.

Although Gourlay's questions to Canadian libraries were made during the conflict with Germany and Japan, he got a reasonably good response by twenty public libraries from a mail out of thirty-five questionnaires. The responses were categorized into several groups:

- library work with outside groups (e.g., YMCA)
- special services (e.g., vocational assistance)
- adult education work within the library (e.g., radio programs, book talks)
- library publicity; and
- library work during wartime (e.g., sending books to soldiers in training camps).

Gourlay also summarized some groups and programs that stood out in educational programming with adults: the Dominion-Provincial training programs for youths in areas such as forestry, agriculture and home crafts; Extension Departments at the University of Alberta and St. Francis Xavier; and the Canadian Association for Adult Education (established in 1935). Of course, he could not deal with every organization, e.g., he did not mention the activities of either Frontier College or Sir George Williams College in Montreal which began offering degrees in adult education in 1934. Library responses to Gourlay's survey were mostly positive. A future 1955 President of the Canadian Library Association, Anne Hume, replied "We used it at a

Department Head Conference the other day. It gave us [Windsor Public Library] a chance to review our sins and omissions. For that we thank you."

Gourlay offered mostly factual evidence gathered in the course of his survey; however, he did provide a limited explanation about the difficulties encountered in the field of adult education that were shared by libraries and related organizations. Through his inquiries he found that there was a lack of co-ordination among the organizations; that distance hindered effective delivery of programs; that provincial regulation of education led to different approaches and funding for programs; and that Canada's heterogeneous, scattered population often was unrecognized and unassisted through want of proper organization for this type of work. Nonetheless, the variety of library programs in large cities such as Toronto and Vancouver, and even the contributions of smaller ones in northern or rural settings (e.g., Timmins and Lethbridge) demonstrated that libraries were alive to the need of adult learning. Gourlay's study showed that libraries had continued to develop work in the adult education field compared to an earlier national study by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics (Library Cooperation with Adult Study Groups in *Survey of Libraries, 1935*)

Adult education would continue to be an important topic on the agenda of Canadian libraries in the postwar period and beyond with many studies and plans being conducted at the local, regional, provincial, and federal level. However, as Gourlay discovered, the library as adult educator was a concept not easy to define and put into practice. Working with adults to identify needs, like selecting books from the universe of publications to build collections, could spin off into many directions that required funding beyond the traditional reach of library budgeting.

Further reading

The Role of Canadian Public Libraries in Adult Education is available full text at Hathi Trust.

American Library Association, *Libraries and Adult Education* (Chicago, 1926) at the Internet Archive site.

British Columbia Public Library Commission, *A Preliminary Study of Adult Education in British Columbia, 1941* (Victoria, 1942) at Hathi Trust site.

Sunday, August 07, 2016

Cross Country Checkup and the Library of the Future (circa 1995)

Duncan McCue begins hosting the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Radio One's call-in show, ***Cross Country Checkup***, on a regular basis at the start of August 2016. This popular show has been on air for more than fifty years. Long-time commentator and author, Rex Murphy, hosted this show for more than twenty years. He often scheduled programs and issues related to books, reading, and libraries in a lively debate mode from the mid-1990s to 2015.

I had the opportunity to be interviewed by Mr. Murphy way back in March 1995 when the future of libraries and books, seemingly overwhelmed in the coming age of the Internet, was often questioned.

- Could libraries stay relevant in the age of the Information Highway?
- Would they wither away and leave half-empty buildings behind, even disappear?
- Could they transition to Virtual Libraries - Libraries Without Walls - Electronic Libraries - Digital Libraries, whatever they might be called in the 21st century?

Robert Fulford spoke on the same program about the use of electronic reference media in a library setting and how important these kinds of resources were. He was not worried about the passing of the traditional role of libraries any time soon.

Of course, Rex Murphy is a skilled interviewer and put me on the spot more than once. But after re-listening to my spontaneous responses in support of libraries as brick and concrete community resource spaces and accessible places where people

and students could find mediators to help locate information, I think most of what I said remains valid twenty years on. The printed book is still with us as a staple in the library along with other media formats. But e-books are great too and they are a lot easier to use now. There are lots of non-print materials --digital resources -- in libraries.

The issues about of how libraries have been transformed from storage sites to information providers have been raised and debated many times since the early 1990s. In fact, this question dates to the use of computers in libraries beginning in the 1960s. Now, the prospects for the 21st century 'library' -- Library 2.0 - are front and center. But users are still the focus: libraries change in relation to user needs and demands and how 'publishers' and the 'public' create content in a multiplicity of ways. There are many types of publishers and many types of publics. There are many varieties of libraries, too.

My interview with Mr. Murphy was recorded more than twenty years ago as a .wav file, so click this link and turn up your audio volume if you are interested in going back to 1995.

[*My interview with Mr. Murphy was recorded more than twenty years ago as a .wav file, so click this link and turn up your audio volume if you are interested in going back to 1995.*](#)

If you prefer to read the transcription for the session interview, following along below.

TRANSCRIPTION FOR REX MURPHY--LORNE BRUCE
INTERVIEW ON CROSS COUNTRY CHECKUP, CBC
RADIO, SUNDAY AFTERNOON, MARCH 19, 1995

Rex Murphy: Obviously we're talking about books we have at some point to talk about libraries. Libraries have long been the bearers of the torch much like the monasteries in the Middle Ages, but they've also been quick in this new age to adapt to the

new technology. Mr. Lorne Bruce is a librarian at the University of Guelph and he's written a book called "Free Books for All" published by Dundurn Press. I spoke with Mr. Bruce earlier today. RM: Mr. Bruce because of your association, at least to my knowledge, is primarily with libraries I mean to put this kind of question to you. Is the library as a central social institution anywhere near as central as it was even 10 or 15 or 20 years ago? What the question means is has all this new kind of information and new ways of gathering information displaced libraries as places where books are kept as things important in people's lives? Lorne Bruce: Well, I think there has been a move away from print, a print type of culture in Canada, certainly during this century with a lot of multimedia, but I think libraries have tried to keep up, tried to remain central to offering a variety of information and also a knowledge base for citizens so that they can come into the library and find information. Talk to librarians who are essentially mediators in the process of information and building knowledge. And I think that the various provincial governments or municipal governments have tried to show [this] for example in some of their advertising campaigns. There was one here in Ontario about 10 years ago, "More than Meets the Eye," that libraries do computer searches. They do have cd [roms]. They're using multimedia. RM: Yeah, but here's my point. Once the libraries walk away from the core of collected books that are there for people to pick up and take home and to read, once they offered a full gallery and menu of other information services even though you keep the name how much have you ceased to be a library? LB: Well, it's still a library. I mean a library is multimedia. RM: It is? LB: It is, yes, there are multimedia libraries and the public library has always tried to have [these] in addition to books other types of formats. RM: OK, maybe I can put the question to your plainer. LB: I would say that they're not trying to abandon or walk away from print media, but they're trying to incorporate these other types of formats. RM: And when you say the print media, do you mean books? LB: Yes. LB: What do you call them [books] again? I am not being annoyingly saucy. Why you call them print media? LB: Well, I think in the library world there are different types of formats and print format is essentially fiction-nonfiction

[publications]. Electronic formats are things like cd-roms, computerized searches from databases which are remote in the United States. And, of course, then there's music and recordings and so on, 16-millimeter films, videos ... RM: Can I ask the question. If the libraries at the present day or if the libraries that you are familiar with had in them nothing else but books for this just as a hypothetical situation nothing but books, how many people will be going to it compared to the number of people that are going to now? LB: Oh, it's very difficult to estimate in terms of percentages and numbers, but certainly it would be a smaller number of people coming into the library. RM: Drastically? LB: At a university? No, not drastically, not drastic cuts in numbers, but certainly I think maybe public libraries would be able to keep say 75 percent of the base of people are coming in.

RM: Can you tell me from your own experience outside of a university context as well, has the type of person who is now visiting a library call him a client or her client, is that type of person a different person from what he or she was 20 years ago?

LB: Well ... that is a difficult question! Studies show that basically the people who continue to come into libraries are more highly educated. They have more specific demands. Perhaps there has been a trend away with these new electronic sources and so on in special libraries and in business libraries and even in public libraries for people to move away from recreational reading and there's more of a function towards providing information services. That's more of a component. RM: I was going to ask whether the cd-roms, whether the information retrieval, whether the ability to connect up with online services and things were the popcorn to get people in to watch the movie. But it sounds like I am misreading it. So, it sounds like they are the movie and the books are the popcorn. LB: Well, I think yes. Books are still the bread and butter. Let's not call it the popcorn. But, certainly, for years and years libraries [and] public libraries have tried to promote computerized searches. And it brings up a variety of issues in the context of downsizing and so on in the last 15 years, of fees for service. And I think these are some of the issues that we're seeing, for example in some of the western cities, not so much in Ontario. RM: Yeah, but there's another question as we make it pretty close to the end. Do you think that

libraries as centers should be there be there in this kind of field? And one of the great advantages for computer claims, the kinds of information that can be accessed via a computer, is that you don't need a big central building. You don't need a warehouse full of people. You simply stay at home typing a few numbers or a few letters and haul it up yourself. LB: Well, you're assuming there that people have the ability to search and manipulate information in these remote databases and go onto the Internet and use Gophers and web servers and so on. I think that will always be a role for the mediator there, and I think a good place is the public library. Good heavens, a lot of the Internet services are public library catalogues, university catalogues, and that's where people are going to try and get information. RM: Would it be right to say that previously a library was a repository for information and now it's an interface. LB: I would think so. There's definitely a service component and not the storage component that was so, so obvious for many years ... especially in the nineteenth century! RM: Which library would you prefer? A nineteenth-century library or a twentieth-century library? LB: Oh, [I] much rather a twentieth-century library because there will be a broader range of services! There is a better service component. Obviously, there's more to read and more to look at and [more] to search. RM: OK, Mr. Bruce, thank you very much for coming in. LB: Thank you very much for having me.

Thursday, July 21, 2016

Library Science for Canadians (1936)

Library Science for Canadians, Beatrice Welling and Catherine Campbell. Toronto: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons Ltd., 1936. xi, 151 p., illus., index. Three editions to 1958.

'Library Science' became an emerging field of study in Canada in the 1930s linked with formal professional education of librarians and with patrons who used libraries on a regular basis. In universities there were two streams of development: library instruction (user education) and library education (professional training) that sometimes intertwined. The historiography of Canadian library science has mostly been devoted to the creation of library schools for training and educational achievement in this period, especially McGill and Toronto. In the 1930s both McGill and Toronto began to issue Bachelor of Library Science (BLS) degrees which were accredited by the American Library Association. But another thread, library science courses for students with academic credit at the undergraduate level, has an interesting history of its own, involving as it does librarians at various university libraries. This was the thrust of ***Library Science for Canadians*** when it first appeared in 1936, the result of a joint effort by two University of Western Ontario librarians, Beatrice W. Welling and Catherine Campbell.

Western was not the first Canadian university to appoint librarians with the rank of teaching instructors. As early as 1911, Acadia introduced an elective library course in the BA program; by 1920 it was offering two credit courses taught by Mary Kinley Ingraham, who continued lecturing and leading laboratory classes until her retirement in 1944. The Acadia courses for undergrads continued into the 1980s. These were designed to encourage student interest in librarianship and to provide basic information on library methods, history, selection, reference, and administration. Western followed this model in the 1920s to the 1960s but adapted it for mostly for first-year undergraduates as a required course with credit to a bachelor's

degree. Students interested in librarianship as a career could use these introductory courses to gain experience for acquiring a specialized, professional degree in Canada or the United States.

Courses with varying credit status began at Western in the early 1920s under Marjorie Ross, then library director Fred Landon (who also taught history). General instruction in the use of books and libraries and common reference works became a required course. Major electives included cataloguing, classification, and reference work. Until 1928, students could select Library Science as a major, but only a handful chose this option. After a 1930 survey of 200 incoming students revealed their lack of library knowledge, the required course was expanded for entry students and electives reduced. By the mid-1930s, courses were also being taught at Western's two affiliate colleges, Assumption (now University of Windsor) and Waterloo (now Wilfrid Laurier) where Mabel Dunham, Kitchener's chief librarian often taught. During this time, there were lectures and assigned readings on the use of books. The general reference course dealt with the use of standard tools to identify topics and bibliographic sources. At a more intensive level, two lectures and three hours of practice per week provided two credits that could be used in the Secretarial Science program. Bachelor of Arts graduates could use these courses as a springboard to graduate education at library schools.

To complement the coursework, two of Western's librarians authored the first Canadian text on library science in 1936. This book continued in print until the late 1950s. The text was designed to make university library research understandable for students and show them how to use library resources advantageously. One author, Beatrice W. Welling, was the more seasoned librarian. A native of New Brunswick, she earned a Bachelor's at the University of New Brunswick in 1909 and her MA at Radcliffe College in 1912. She attended library school at Simmons College in 1914-15 and began cataloguing at the University of Chicago before returning to work in Canada as a special librarian in the Arthur D. Little Co. in Montreal and then the Honorary Advisory Council for Scientific and Industrial

Research in Ottawa (later known as the National Research Council). She was particularly interested in government documents and began working at the Vancouver Public Library and subsequently at the Western library in 1926 as Fred Landon's assistant. Catherine Campbell began working in 1923 shortly after attaining her BA at Western in 1922.

Together, the two librarians devised a basic text that served Western students for a quarter century. Separate chapters dealt with classification (normally LC and Dewey); the card catalogue, the parts of a book (indexes, half-titles, etc.); 'How to Judge a Book'; periodicals and newspapers; 'Union Lists and Other Title Lists' (e.g., scientific periodicals and regional lists); the vertical file; 'Bibliography'; and a lengthy section of selected reference works (dictionaries, almanacs, and leading tools in subject areas such as business and commerce) which was attributed to Beatrice Welling.

Welling and Campbell were certain that basic training was valuable for students, not only at university but in their later work or profession.

This training in the use of a library should give the reader confidence in his ability to take advantage of the resources of any library, and by removing obstacles to the acquisition of knowledge, should tend to increase the delights of reading and induce the habit of study. (p. 1)

The authors felt that a better understanding of the merits of systematic use rather than browsing and knowledge of inter-library loans had many benefits. Helping students learn to help themselves was not only practical but also a knowledgeable endeavour for learners. Their points about judging reference works followed a systematic pattern: authority, scope, bias, currency, quality of arrangement, format, and additional bibliography remain standard elements today. (p. 40-41).

The importance of ***Library Science for Canadians*** lies today not in its teachings on the use of libraries, which were changed

drastically by the time Western dropped its library requirement for first year-students and by the 1960s when libraries began to automate. The book's importance lay in its national approach. Here was an up-to-date work that Canadian students could use along with the American *Guide to the Use of Libraries*, authored by Margaret Hutchins and Alice Johnson, which was published in many editions after 1920. Before WWII, there was scant Canadian information in the library field that could be used effectively in classrooms. Welling and Campbell filled a void and made a meaningful contribution that many Western students could appreciate. The text was particularly important for students who were denied access to library stacks and had to request books through the main circulating desk.

Welling and Campbell were motivated by the idea that the library could be an enjoyable experience. They were not simply utilitarian instructor-lecturers in the new Lawson Library which opened in 1934.

Our libraries of to-day are pleasant, friendly places where one may browse a while in peaceful surroundings, seek a quiet corner for concentrated study of a particular subject or obtain assistance in the solving of a vexing problem. (p. 1)

They believed finding information expeditiously was part of this experience. Although ***Library Science for Canadians*** and library courses in the undergraduate curriculum were eclipsed shortly before Western's new graduate School of Library and Information Science began accepting students in 1967, two generations of students had already benefited from library education in the BA program.

Wednesday, October 14, 2015

The National Library of Canada: Celebrating a Half Century, 1953-2003



As the National Library of Canada (NLC) moved inexorably to its golden anniversary in 2003, it was still a viable institution despite years of cutback management. In line with neoliberal philosophy, services had been reduced or eliminated (e.g. the popular Multilingual service) but many basic functions remained that made it a recognizable national entity. Although it was aging technology, AMICUS, Canada's national bibliographic database, contained 25,000,000 records for more than 1,000 Canadian libraries. The NLC's Union Catalogue was a reliable source for bibliographic information and library locations for books and periodicals that could be used by other libraries for interloan. The NLC's comprehensive Canadiana collection was largely due to Legal Deposit Provisions whereby Canadian publishers were required by law to send, as a general rule, two copies of all published works in various formats. The Library's Canadian Cataloging in Publication program was a collaborative effort with publishers and other libraries that permitted books to be catalogued per-publication. The Canadian Theses service coordinated the microfiche reproduction and loan of theses on a timely basis. The NLC's Canadian Book Exchange Centre offered a utilitarian service to libraries for the distribution and exchange of surplus publications. These, and other services, aligned the NLC with other major Canadian libraries on a reciprocal basis. Together with the Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information (CISTI), comprehensive national library services from Ottawa were available for Canadians and

others working beyond Canadian borders.

For the public at large and researchers the old Public Archives–National Library building on 395 Wellington Street shared with the National Archives remained a valuable service point. The second floor Reading Room allowed for consultation of 'closed-stack' resources from the general collection by retrievals submitted through an on-site AMICUS. The Music and Rare Book Divisions provided in-depth reference, referral, and consultative services to Canadian and foreign researchers, libraries and organizations. The Reference and Information Services Division provided reference in Canadiana and Canadian studies to researchers and libraries within Canada and abroad. Inter-library Loan filled requests for materials by lending a copy, providing a photocopy, or giving referrals to other libraries that might loan items.

The fourth National Librarian, Dr. Roch Carrier, appointed in October 1999, sought various improvements. He encouraged expanding the reach of the NLC to Canadians through travelling exhibitions and the newly formed Digital Library of Canada, an effort to document Canadian heritage and culture and to provide access on the NLC website. Dr. Carrier also advocated for literacy and reading through improved school libraries. His effort to stem the water leaks at 395 Wellington was more successful when the roof was repaired in 2002. Two years earlier, more than 2,500 publications had been damaged after a broken pipe allowed water to enter three floors. The NLC's administration was changing and its staffing attempting to accommodate technical innovations, such as the Internet and the advent of digital publishing. Nevertheless, ominous clouds were gathering. It wasn't just the frequent newspaper stories of water damage that were endangering Canada's national collections at '395' or the atrophied budget NLC was struggling with that were cause for alarm. The NLC's parent body, the Department of Canadian Heritage, a neoliberal creature in search of prominence,

continued to take 'fresh looks' at Canada's cultural institutions and heritage.

While some officials, such as Auditor-General Sheila Fraser, stated many federal heritage buildings (including the NLC) were in a poor condition and recommended the government 'do something' before cultural heritage resources might be lost to future generations, Canadian Heritage was developing new concepts. Sheila Copps, the Minister and MP for Hamilton East, preferred to ignore the problems inherent in merging the NLC with the National Archives, something [the report by John English released in summer 1999](#) had emphasized along with his recommendations on updating mandates of the library and archives. In fact, on October 21st, 2002, the minister provided a simplistic, inaccurate rationale to MPs based on current ideas about a knowledge-based economy when she rose to explain the proposed merger in the context of reduced funding for the Canadian Archival Information Network.

["Mr. Speaker, we are of course talking about two different issues when we refer to the National Archives and the National Library. Three years ago, it was decided that it would be a good thing to merge these two institutions to present to the general public everything is part of the wealth of historical information belonging to the National Archives and the National Library. This is what we will do."](#)

During the Parliamentary debates on the merger (Bills C-36 and its successor C-8) a few MPs actually got beyond the political obfuscation and bombastic visionary goals of a long-term plan to combine administration, storage, and preservation work in an area around the former National Archives preservation centre in Gatineau and to establish a national Portrait Gallery of Canada. Critics addressed the most obvious and long-standing problems, lack of funding and intertwined mandates. Also, NLC was a weak player in national information policy development and

infrastructure. The general perception that a new administrative entity, Library and Archives Canada, would get enhanced visibility, relevance and accessibility carried the day. A single agency would allow for improved and innovative changes on a collaborative basis for the humanities and social sciences. Alternative schemes, such as combining CISTI (the country's 'other' national library) and the NLC were not considered. "[Toward a New Kind of Knowledge Institution](#)" outlined typical promotional views for Canadian heritage operations in Ottawa. All would be well in time: there would be

- synergy of collections, skills and constituencies;
- easier access to integrated holdings, both for researchers and for millions of ordinary Canadians;
- enhanced service delivery to Canadians; and
- better use of scarce resources.

Later, in summer 2004, LAC released a discussion document, [Creating a New Kind of Knowledge Institution](#), about key future directions and initiatives to be taken. A new era was beginning—Canada proposed to be a leader in new knowledge (or memory) institution implementation with information technology and digitization as major drivers. An older era of separate institutions, which were still viable in other countries and capable of harnessing technology in their own manner (even today in 2015), was out of favour in Canada's capital. Time—perhaps a decade or two?—would reveal the wisdom behind the merger and plans for the future that might be celebrated in their own right.

Further information on post-2004 developments

[Library and Archives Canada](#) at Wikipedia

[Timeline: Library and Archives Canada Service Decline after 2004](#) at Ex Libris Association website

[Archived web site for 50th anniversary](#) celebration of National
Library of Canada.

Slide [History of CISTI, 1924-2009](#) available on Internet Archive

Tuesday, September 29, 2015

The National Library of Canada in the 80s and 90s: The Reality of Neoliberal Reform



By the time Guy Sylvestre retired at the end of 1983 many ideas crafted in the *Future of the National Library* (published in 1979) were no longer achievable. In the early 1980s, Canadian political and social life was in a state of flux. The election of a Conservative federal government in 1984 was a harbinger of fiscal restraint in public spending. In western countries the welfare state, often associated with Keynesian economics, had reached its apogee. The era of neoliberal economic reforms, also embraced often by neoconservatives such as Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, had arrived. For the majority of people, including librarians, this critical change in political decision making was at first slowly perceived. But, by the time Bill Clinton's campaign slogan, "It's the economy, stupid!", helped him win the American 1992 Presidential election, everyone began to realize that market issues trumped social and cultural issues in the North America. The success of the Reform Party of Canada in the 1993 nation election was another indication of new national policy priorities.

The concept of reduced government services--government as an enabler not a provider--and the primacy of economic market-

based policies became evident in the 1980s and 90s with the privatization of crown corporations such as Air Canada, Canadian National Railway, and Petro-Canada. Politicians and public servants alike expressed less enthusiasm for the qualitative nature of the 'public good' and more interest in furthering the success of federal institutions in a market economy and the rhetoric of 'free trade.' For a service organization like the National Library (NLC), government restructuring required some different thinking about core services and a reassessment of its activities. When a national study, *Report of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee* (the Applebaum-Hébert Report) appeared in 1982, it had little to recommend about the NLC except that a more suitable building should be provided. Obviously, the new National Librarian, Marianne Scott, faced many challenges after her appointment in 1984. A new or renovated building was just one.

On the surface, the budget situation for the NLC did not seem too precarious at the outset of the 1980s. Total funding for fiscal 1981/82 was just over \$21 million. By 1991, it was almost \$41 million; but, adjustments for a decade of rapid inflation consumed 3/4 of new funding. The 1990s were to prove even more difficult: by 1999 the total budget had been reduced to \$38 million. In real terms, over two decades, there had been no revenue growth. As a result, the NLC applied the logic of neoliberal management and businesslike trimming: it streamlined operations, reduced collection building, and approached new developments, such as internet services and new digital initiatives, with caution. The rhetoric of 'Doing more with less!'; 'Empowerment!'; 'Partnerships!'; and 'Right-sizing!' were the order of the day.

National Library of Canada Studies in the 1990s

The NLC's situation was not unique, all libraries and federal organizations encountered problems, but effectively national leadership, even in the federal sector of government libraries,

was slipping away from the NLC. Although a variety of national and regional reports still emanated from Ottawa, an internal report, ***Orientations: A Planning Framework for the 1990s***, which appeared in 1989, focused on NLC's own core activities: the development of a decentralized Canadian library and information network; resource sharing; preservation; and a commitment to Canadian studies. This short report was very different from ***The Future of the National Library***. It was not a surprise when The Friends of the National Library of Canada was founded in 1991 to raise awareness and encourage public support of the Library. It was considered a necessity.

A second study--***Canadian Information Resource Sharing Strategy***, released in 1994--was more consultative and client oriented. It outlined a framework for Canadian libraries to develop coordinated resource sharing systems that would allow Canadians access to information. The NLC was retiring the DOBIS system and replacing it with AMICUS for its collections and union catalogue.



NLC website in 1997

However, the report arrived at the very time that the "Information Highway" exploded on the library community and the world. People began to envisage different ways to get rapid, convenient access to information required for research, business or leisure purposes without libraries. Nevertheless, the NLC was one of the first Canadian libraries to establish a substantive website in June 1995. It was 'keeping up with the times' but unable to leverage government support for new identified roles, especially in the digital environment where Industry Canada was playing an important role.

A third study, *Electronic Publications Pilot Project*, issued in June 1996, was a pilot project that made recommendations to address issues in identifying, locating, acquiring, reporting, storing, preserving, and accessing electronic publications to prevent major gaps in the Canadian heritage and research resources. The report concluded that capturing and mounting publications on NL servers was time consuming, the lack of appropriate standards was a major obstacle for long-term preservation, and thus for the foreseeable future electronic publications should be acquired on a selective basis.

Shortly before Marianne Scott prepared to set down after fifteen years, in April 1997 the NLC submitted a brief, *The Role of the National Library of Canada in Support of Culture in Canada*, to a committee of the Department of Canadian Heritage, to which it now reported. Scott emphasized the NLC had a vital role to play in the nation's cultural information and communications environment. The preservation of materials in the current building was threatened by water damage in collections areas. Canadiana acquisitions were much reduced. Canadian Heritage, under the minister Sheila Copps, was reviewing its own general role and, of course, applying neoliberal standards to its activities. Ironically, the processes the NLC had assiduously applied to its own internal operations and administration would be applied to the portfolio of cultural agencies in Canadian Heritage.

Liberal Government Review of the NLC and National Archives, 1998–99

On 12 March 1998, Sheila Copps, the new Minister of Canadian Heritage, announced the launch of consultations on the "future role and structure" of the National Archives of Canada and the NLC. Some people in the cultural field understood the coded language that this entailed: amalgamation. The current Liberal government was wedded to fiscal cutbacks and reduced financial transfers to provinces. However, the subsequent report, by John English, *The Role of the National Archives of Canada and the National Library of Canada*, completed in 1999, looked to the future, especially in digital terms, and explicitly rejected the idea of unification. The report had many good ideas, but was obscured--sidelined in political parlance--by the prior announcement of a new appointment. Roch Carrier, an award-winning author with minimal library expertise, stepped into the position of National Librarian in July 1999.

"We have to build a vision, but I'm not ready to talk about it yet," Carrier first advised the press in early July 1999. Then he went on a two-week cross-Canada tour to discover ideas and opinions about libraries and the NLC. "My role will be to help them [NLC staff] build the future" he wrote later in the *National Library Bulletin* in November 1999. However, his 'Bridge to the 21st Century' would prove to be a short span to a barren shore.

Further Reading

The [English Report](#) recommendations are available on the web on the wayback machine at the Internet Archive.

Read [news about the National Library](#) in the late 1990s archived on the web.

My blog on the merger of the National Library with the National Archives is [at this link](#).

Friday, July 03, 2015

***Report on Canadian Libraries (1941)* by Charles F. McCombs**

Report on Canadian Libraries, 1941, 81 p. Originally unpublished with three appendices, index, letter of transmission, and schedule of Canadian travel by Charles F. McCombs, New York Public Library, on behalf of the Rockefeller Foundation. Reprinted photographically with extensive commentary by William J. Buxton and Charles R. Acland, ***Philanthropy and Canadian Libraries: The Politics of Knowledge and Information*** Montreal: Graduate School of Library and Information Studies, and The Centre for Research on Canadian Cultural Industries and Institutions, McGill University, 1998. 51 and 88 p.

The Rockefeller Foundation and Canadian Libraries

The Charles McCombs Report was the last of many American philanthropic Canadian studies begun in the 1930s. It was undertaken in 1941 to discover if further assistance might enable Canadian libraries to work with American institutions, especially the Rockefeller Foundation (RF) which previously had not been active on Canada's library scene. At the outset of WWII, the Foundation was exploring the development of international exchanges through librarianship and, with the development of microfilm systems and readers, it was interested in capturing the historic record of countries using this relatively new technology for newspapers, books, and periodicals. But before taking action in a new theatre of operation, the RF needed to explore the state of Canadian libraries and the merits of their newspaper holdings.

The senior administrators at the RF, especially John Marshall, the Assistant Director of the Humanities Division, felt more thorough examination of Canadian libraries (particularly research collections) was necessary in terms of collections, staffing capabilities, and national coordination before

recommending courses of action. Accordingly, in May 1941, \$2,750 was allocated to allow for the secondment of Charles McCombs from the main reading room of the New York Public Library to conduct a study of Canadian libraries. McCombs was an experienced librarian, born in 1887, noted for his bibliographic talents. In four trips, from June to November 1941, McCombs visited almost seventy libraries in eight provinces (omitting P.E.I.), submitting his report shortly before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the American entry into WWII.

The McCombs Report, 1941

What did Charles McCombs report on? Because his report remained unpublished for almost six decades, its contents were never adequately referenced in postwar Canadian studies. Two researchers, William Buxton and Charles Acland, finally dealt with the context and importance of McCombs' work in their admirable study published in 1998. They took care to reprint the 1941 report in its entirety while at the same time discussing his recommendations and the aftermath of the Rockefeller Foundation's and Carnegie Corporation's subsequent financial aid to Canadian libraries and librarians.

They demonstrated that the impact of American philanthropy on Canadian library development in the 1930s and 1940s was directed to particular projects that intersected with Canadian aspirations for progressive steps, coordinated assistance from the American Library Association, and also the policy interests of the two foundations in the immediate postwar period. The intersection of this multiple engagement provided crucial, initial assistance for the formation of the Canadian Library Association in 1946 and the subsequent legislation for a National Library in 1953.

Thus, it can be said that McCombs' work helped advance two vital postwar developments. He observed that the most pressing concern in Canada was "lack of national coordination of activity" and recommended financial aid for the new Canadian Library

Council, which had coalesced in June 1941 and held its first meeting later in October with RF financial support. The RF was quick to promise \$17,500, funneled through the ALA, for use by the Canadian Library Council in 1942 with the objective to establish microphotography and general advisory services (e.g., fellowships and field visits) for Canadian libraries, another important concern of McCombs. Subsequently, the Carnegie Corporation made five payments from 1944-48 to the Canadian Library Council, through the ALA, totalling \$20,000. With this seed money, the CLC transitioned into the Canadian Library Association, hired Elizabeth Morton as executive director, and opened an office in Ottawa. CLA published its first list of microfilmed newspapers in 1948 and championed the cause of a national library.

Buxton and Acland make the case for American influence on Canadian activities in their well documented study. But the McCombs study also is revealing at many points for it was conducted through personal interviews and observations: "I did not submit a questionnaire, or make my visits armed with notebook and pencil" (p. 2). His use of statistics was brief, confined mostly to larger universities and colleges. Many comments appear in his report that otherwise would have been expunged before publication. McCombs seems to have been influenced a good deal by André Siegfried's *Canada* (translated into English in 1937) which treated the English-French divide, Canada's nascent nationality, our national east-west and north-south economic pull, and our British-European and North American ties. McCombs referenced these points throughout his report, e.g. the regionalism of the "five Canadas," isolation, and absence of cooperation, even amongst libraries on the downtown campus of the University of Toronto (p. 9). He suggested a reorganization of Ottawa's Parliamentary Library (to make it more efficient) and formation of a national library with co-equal French and English speaking directors (p. 74).

Because of the RF interest in the potential of Canadian content for researchers, McCombs spent the most part of his report on larger libraries in universities. On the personal side, he got on

well with Toronto Public Library's chief, Charles Sanderson, who was enthusiastic about the prospects of microduplication in libraries. McCombs was disappointed that W.S. Wallace, University of Toronto, did "not show much interest in microphotography." Two female university chief librarians, Elizabeth Dafoe at Manitoba and Mary K. Ingraham at Acadia, were commended for their work. He found that the Citizen's Free Library, Halifax, was "a disgrace." (p.62). He spoke of the need for advanced library training and education--Canada's library schools at McGill and Toronto were a "Type II" ALA category offering only one year of professional education (Type I schools offered advanced work leading to a Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy). McCombs judged the other schools at Montreal and Ottawa would not meet ALA standards for accreditation. He found the provincial legislative libraries lacking: "with the exception of British Columbia, they lack adequate catalogues, and pay little attention to standard library methods, although there are occasional signs of progress" (p. 48). For the most part, his criticisms and compliments were designed to foster improvements in administration, finance, and collections as well as bolstering his own recommendations.

McCombs knew the limitations of his brief travels. In his letter to John Marshall on 1 Dec. 1941 he wrote, "I am acutely aware of the shortcomings of this lengthy document; there is much more that I could have said, but I have tried to give an impartial account of conditions observed, including impressions of personalities." On balance, many of his observations updated the study, *Libraries in Canada* by Ridington, Locke, and Black published in 1933.

McCombs died in May 1947 after a lengthy career as a reference and bibliographic expert spanning more than three decades at the New York Public Library. The CLA continued the newspaper project he had advocated into the early 1980s. The importance of his original proposal was recognized in 1958 when the newly formed Canada Council granted \$10,000 to CLA to continue microfilming papers in order to further Canadian research. Some CLA newspapers from the microfilm project are searchable

today in the Google digital newspaper archive, e.g. the Toronto World.

Also, Buxton and Acland, "A Neglected Milestone: Charles F. McCombs' Report on Canadian Libraries, 1941," in Peter McNally, ed., *Readings in Canadian Library History 2*, p. 265-74 (Ottawa: Canadian Library Association, 1996).

My blog on an earlier national report in 1939 by Jean Stewart, from British Columbia is [at this link](#).

Friday, May 22, 2015

The Future of the National Library of Canada in the Nineteen Eighties (1979)

National Library of Canada, ***The future of the National Library of Canada = L'avenir de la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada***. Ottawa, 1979; ix, 88, 93, ix p.



At the end of the 1970s the most thoughtful statement about the goals and services of Canada's National Library (NLC) appeared in a short bilingual ninety-page publication, *The Future of the National Library of Canada*. The culmination of three years of consultation and review, *The Future* contained various recommendations, eleven in all, about where the NLC might head in the 1980s. Throughout the report's pages, it is clear that the National Librarian, Guy Sylvestre, believed that

strengthened programs, better financing, further organizational growth, and cooperative work with Canadian libraries would benefit the country's informational needs on a collective basis. The study recognized that Canadian library resource sharing was taking place in a decentralized national framework with distributed leadership but it sought to strengthen the NLC's role.

The Canadian equivalent of a national library, born in 1953, had been a latecomer on the stage of national development. The NLC had grown slowly and focused on bibliographic work, collections in the humanities-arts-social sciences, and issues such as legal deposit. It was one principal library in the midst of other major research libraries, regional library developments, changing

library technology, and shifting priorities. In Ottawa itself, there were other federal libraries--the Library of Parliament, CISTI, the Agriculture Library, and library of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics--with 'national' roles. The growth of university research collections from the mid-1960s had been dramatic and rivaled the NLC's ability to collect and distribute information resources. While the NLC's consultation and review process, 1976-79, was lengthy, the list of contributions was short--just 33 briefs submitted in total (12 from individuals). For some, the report was about the Library reviewing itself.

New Directions for the National Library

The Future's eleven recommendations outlined new directions, organization, and objectives. Some were extensions of current activities; others pointed to fresh courses of action. The principal thrusts moved in two directions: networking of resources and bibliographic networking. There was to be an expansion of legal deposit to cover maps and microforms; improved research collections; more emphasis on support for Canadian studies; and improved interloan of NLC holdings across Canada. The report proposed a restructuring of the NLC's duties *viz a viz* its partner, the Public Archives of Canada: it recommended that musical papers (p. 30-32) should be transferred to the NLC's Music Division; that the Archive's national map collection should become a new section of the NLC; and that literary manuscripts would become the preserve of the NLC. The study called upon the Secretary of State initiate a review to rationalize the functions and responsibilities of the Archives and the Library.

The Future recommendations for bibliographic networking were less developed. It proposed to build a decentralized bibliographic network in conjunction with other computerized centres. The NLC would fund research for development studies and pilot projects and strengthen its own online information retrieval services with new databases. The NLC would be prepared to establish network management and governance groups in a collaborative fashion. It recognized the NLC was underdeveloped in computerized services compared to the

National Research Council's CISTI Library and some universities, e.g. Toronto, but was willing to be an important centre in this type of activity. To this end, it was suggested that the National Research Council Act be amended to allow the incorporation of CISTI into the National Library structure and that its funding be transferred to the NLC. Needless to say, this proposal was contentious and likely doomed to failure from the outset from institutional and client perspectives.

A final section of the report came as no surprise: a separate building for the Public Archives (or equivalent existing spaces) was put forward. The Archives had already drawn up a similar proposal for government scrutiny. Personnel in the two institutions currently were residing in several buildings.

The Future stirred up opposition and unease. The Association of Canadian Archivists criticized some proposals based on archival practice and the threat of removing conservation work to the library. The Public Archives itself opposed recommendations that sought to clarify roles based on faulty distinctions between library and archival work. The reception in the library community was less adversarial but nevertheless skeptical. For example, NLC's selection and testing of the DOBIS system (Dortmunder/Bibliothekssystem), a mainframe computerized library information and management system originally designed by IBM, was thought by some to be less 'user friendly' than alternative North American systems even though the federal government version was designed for Canadian use.

The hierarchy of national and regional nodes, linked to individual libraries, remained an elusive, unwelcome goal. Regional groups, such as the Ontario Council of University Libraries, had their own problems: UNICAT/TELICAT, a co-operative cataloguing service enabling shared access to catalogue records across all OCUL members, was dissolved in 1980 after disappointing participation. There were many options on the networking table and connectivity with American research libraries was on the horizon with the development of the Ohio College Library Center after 1978. Nonetheless, NLC

recommendations on expanding inter-lending and financing projects were welcomed by library groups and associations, such as the Canadian Library Association.

Although the more controversial recommendations were never implemented, the NLC was able to build upon others. DOBIS proved to be a reliable system and continued in use by federal libraries into the 1990s. Interloan eventually expanded. But development was less a matter of establishing policies and priorities than it was of budgetary considerations. It was clear that federal funding for NLC was ebbing in the early 1980s. An average annual inflation rate of 6% continued to erode increases as the government grappled with rising prices between 1981-90. Guy Sylvestre's national vision for enhanced NLC resources and programs was not to be, partly due to financing and the 'autonomy' that most major Canadian libraries desired. The bold strokes in *The Future of the National Library of Canada* were rapidly fading by time Sylvestre's term of office was ending in 1983--things were going in a different trajectory. The wisdom of more pragmatic measures would soon surface in NLC reports and policy directions.

The [Future of the National Library of Canada](#) has been digitized and is available to read at the Internet Archives of books.

My blog about federal government neoliberal cutback management and its impact on the National Library in the 1980s and 1990s is [at this link](#).

Thursday, May 14, 2015

National Library of Canada Expansion from 1967 to the Mid-1970s



Canada's centennial, 1967, was not just a time to reflect on the country's past but a time to look forward as well. After the \$13 million Public Archives and National Library Building on Wellington Street opened in June, both archivists and librarians had better facilities and more staff to provide their services. The National Library had grown to more than 200 workers. When Dr. W.K. Lamb, the Dominion Archivist and National Librarian, retired in 1968, a decision was made to appoint separate directors for the two institutions. The new National Librarian was Guy Sylvestre, an author, civil servant, and Associate Director of the Library of Parliament from 1956-68. Dr. Sylvestre had worked in Ottawa for a quarter of a century and possessed a good knowledge of library activity across Canada. Now he was in a position to exploit his contacts in the nation's capital and develop ideas about the National Library (NLC) that would make it more relevant in the expanding Canadian information environment.

The first major development on Dr. Sylvestre's watch was a revised National Library Act, which came into force in September 1969. The National Librarian was charged with coordinating the library services of departments, branches, and agencies of the Government and authorized to enter into agreements with libraries, associations, and institutions "in and outside Canada." One positive result from this was the eventual exchange of MARC (MAchine Readable Cataloging) magnetic tape records with the Library of Congress and other national libraries. Automation projects and standards became essential building blocks for library progress after 1970. 'Systems' became a library catchword, spawning many acronyms and a Research and Planning Branch at the NLC staffed by programmers and analysts. Standards were also a priority; thus, the CAN/MARC format was developed for English and French language records and international cataloging activities coordinated by a new Office of Library Standards established in 1973.

While the NLC explored and developed computerized systems and standards, it also began a fundamental reorganization of its collections and introduced new services for Canadian libraries, the federal government, and the public. Some notable highlights were:

- creation of a Music Division in 1970 under the leadership of Dr. Helmut Kallmann, who built an impressive collection of Canadian manuscripts, printed materials, and audio recordings. When he retired in 1987, the NLC's music collection was internationally recognized. Kallmann received the Order of Canada in 1986.
- establishment of a Library Documentation Centre to capture information on library development for use of Canadian librarians and libraries. The Centre began publishing an annual *Directory of Library Associations in Canada* in 1974.

- formation of Canadian Book Exchange Centre (1973) to acquire and distribute government publications to Canada and a few foreign countries. By 1975, the Centre was handling a million items annually.
- beginning of historical bibliographic work on pre-1900 Canadiana emanating from a new Retrospective National Bibliography Division.
- establishment of a Division for the Visually and Physically Handicapped, which initially attempted to provide reference services and cooperate with libraries and organizations on various projects.
- start of work by the Federal Libraries Liaison Office (est. 1970) to improve the coordination of Government of Canada library services. After an extensive survey of almost 200 federal libraries, this office recommended formation of a Council of Federal Libraries which came into being in 1976. The Office and Council were key elements in allowing the NLC to coordinate federal library activities and in offering its constituent government members to work on problems on a cooperative basis.
- forming of a Rare Books and Manuscripts Division with a reading room in 1973 to organize rare materials, offer reference, develop policies on acquisitions, and preserve collections.
- initiating a Children's Literature Service to coordinate national activities. It began issuing supplements to Sheila Egoff and Alvine Bélisle's *Notable Canadian Children's Books* in 1977.
- inauguration of a Multilingual Biblioservice in 1973: this multicultural project acquired, cataloged, and loaned books in languages other than French and English to Canadian libraries (mostly public) for two decades.
- commencement in 1973 of Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) services concentrating on the humanities and social sciences. SDI was designed to offer timely information through the use of burgeoning computerized databases, e.g. *Psychological Abstracts* and ERIC.

- establishment of a Collections Development Branch with responsibility to systematize selections for the NLC, collect information on policies of major libraries, and offer assistance in resource development of Canadian libraries.
- implementation of Canadian Cataloguing in Publication (CIP) a cooperative project which provided publishers with basic cataloging information and reduced original cataloging costs.
- assignment of standard numbers for serials and books -- ISSN and ISBN -- to register and identify Canadian publications in an international publishing environment.
- expansion of its own interlending activities and locational service for libraries

It was a busy and exciting period at the NLC. Legal deposit was expanded, important exhibitions held, international conferences hosted, and many studies published, such as ***Roll Back the Years***, a history of Canadian recorded sound. Staffing expanded dramatically, from about 200 in 1967 to more than 450 by the mid-1970s. Likewise, the operating budget rose from just less than \$1.5 million to almost \$10 million. However, there were challenges on the horizon. The main building was no longer adequate to house collections and staff. The Public Archives was similarly faced with space problems. Automation of the Union Catalogue was only just beginning. The NLC continued to share its Canadian mandate with the newly formed Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information, a creation of the National Research Council, which opened its own building in 1974 for more than a million items and a staff of more than 100. Federal government initiatives were now more explicit about the need for long-range plans and multi-year financing; as a result, incremental change was becoming more difficult to implement in budget requests.

Consequently, Dr. Sylvestre launched a comprehensive review of the NLC's mandate and activities in 1976. He was hoping to

develop a consensus about the future of the NLC with broad-based input from the Canadian library community and to provide an appropriate plan of action for the 1980s. Regional initiatives by other library agencies, like UNICAT/TELECAT, a bilingual automated cataloguing system used by libraries in Quebec and Ontario, were in development. The NLC had grown dramatically, but could it sustain its services and continue to expand? A certain amount of skepticism had arisen in the early 1970s about cooperative library projects--these efforts often did not deliver the same benefits to all participants and could engender divisive debates.

In the developing funding climate of governments and public administrators at all levels 'financial restraint' was becoming a byword and 'cutback management' would soon enter the administrative lexicon. Annual inflation rates of 7-11% rapidly eroded revenue increases. Dr. Sylvestre was known on occasion (e.g., at the Canadian Library Association's Edmonton conference in 1978) to lament that NLC funding was inadequate to the many tasks at hand. Was the NLC's glass to be "half full or half empty;" would there be a "silver lining" in the clouds? Much was riding on the results of its consultative assessment and resultant report, *The Future of the National Library of Canada* which is the subject of another post here in [Library History Today](#).

Wednesday, April 15, 2015

The Amulree Commission Report (1933) and Newfoundland Public Libraries

Newfoundland Royal Commission 1933: Report. William Warrender Mackenzie, 1st Baron Amulree, chair. London. H.M.S.O., 1933. vi, 283 p., maps.

The Newfoundland Royal Commission, 1933

Important advances were made in Canada in the 1930s by the provision of Carnegie grants for public library development in British Columbia, Prince Edward Island, and Nova Scotia. However, in Newfoundland library development was sparked by economic hardship and an entirely different investigative process. At the beginning of 1900, Newfoundland remained a Crown Colony of the British Empire and did not achieve the status of a self-governing Dominion until 1907. The capital, St. John's, had the misfortune of seeing its Carnegie promise of \$50,000 for a free public library, made in June 1901, lapse despite the best efforts of a prominent judge, Daniel W. Prowse, who successfully lobbied for passage of a Public Libraries Act in 1902 (2 Edw. VII c.20). Although a city library board was established, early efforts to erect a building were not realized due to problems related to housing a museum and municipal offices.

Municipal library promotion was neglected for a time although enabling legislation continued in force. Eventually, debts stemming from the First World War and the onset of economic turmoil after 1929 led to increasingly unstable political conditions in Newfoundland. In the midst of a bleak depression, the Newfoundland government requested loans from Great Britain to alleviate its dire financial state and in the process suspended its own self-governance at the end of 1933. The British government established a Royal Commission to examine the future of Newfoundland and make recommendations on the

island's finances, fisheries, and political status. It marked the end of almost eighty years of 'responsible government,' and for the next fifteen years (1934–1949) Newfoundland and Labrador would continue to be administered by an appointed Governor and the unelected Commission.

The Commission was chaired by Lord Amulree, William Warrender Mackenzie, 1st Baron Amulree, who conducted an extensive survey of Newfoundland's political, economic, and social conditions with a few colleagues during the first six months of 1933. One feature of the Commission report, seldom commented on by library historians in Canadian studies, was the observations and suggestions about the island's libraries. In a chapter on subsidiary considerations, the Commission reported:

We were much surprised, on our arrival at St. John's, to find that there was no public library in the capital. The need for such a library need not be stressed. The provision of a public library is wholly beyond the immediate resources of the Government, nor could we expect that an appeal for subscriptions for this purpose could be launched with success at the present time. (para. 628)

Of course, by 'public library' the commissioners meant a tax-supported library freely open to the public. Subscription libraries, mechanics' institutes, and rental libraries had long been the mainstay of library provision on the island since the early 19th century. In its concluding library section, the Amulree Report recommended that "We understand that arrangements are in view for the establishment of a public library in St. John's. We think it is important that public libraries should be established in the larger out ports as opportunity offers and that steps should be taken to extend and improve the recently instituted service of travelling subscription libraries." (para. 629) The report recognized that a public library for residents in St. John's was necessary, as well as service to rural and remote communities.



Grenfell Mission library, St. Anthony, c. 1916

A decade before, in 1926, the Carnegie Corporation of New York had provided \$5,000 at the request of the Newfoundland Bureau of Education to establish a remote travelling library service. Memorial University College administered the grant, and requests for deliveries were shipped to schools and outport communities reached by coastal vessels; however, the service languished at the outset of the Great Depression after the Carnegie financing was expended.

More dependable long-term support came from the Grenfell Mission in Newfoundland and Labrador, which distributed books to coastal communities for decades as part of its medical and social services. Sir Wilfred Grenfell (1865–1940) was a remarkable British medical missionary who dedicated most of his life to the provision of health-care services and social assistance in northern Newfoundland and Labrador. His Mission first established a working library in a schoolhouse on the northern peninsula at St. Anthony in 1914 with the aid of trained American librarians. It was a community effort: books were lent, clubs were formed, and story times held. In the 1930s, the library was relocated to an older building where it continued to serve as a community centre for adults and children by offering a space for meetings and table games for children.

Newfoundland Public Library Service Begins

Comments on libraries in the Amulree Report spurred immediate action in St. John's. A few citizens, led by the Commissioner for Public Utilities, Thomas Lodge, formed a committee in 1934 to begin planning for the establishment of a city public library. By January 22, 1935, a Public Libraries Act was passed allowing the Public Libraries Board to establish libraries and services, in effect creating a system similar to the emerging regional library systems already demonstrated in British Columbia and underway in Prince Edward Island. The fourth section of the new Act stated: "It shall be the duty of the Board to establish, conduct and maintain a public libraries or libraries in St. John's and in other places in Newfoundland as the Board may deem expedient and to establish and maintain travelling or circulating libraries if the Board shall deem it expedient." Further, section 6 of the Act permitted the Board to receive gifts or bequests of money and books, furniture and other things suitable for its purposes, and section 7 allowed the charging and collecting of fees "for the use of its libraries or of any of its facilities." The Board reported to the Commissioner of Public Utilities and Harold Newell was appointed chief librarian.



Gosline Library Staff, c.1944

With the Gosling Library serving as a central resource, the Public Libraries Board, headed by Dr. A.C. Hunter, and through

the work of its Outport Library Committee, eventually established a regional plan to provide library services to communities with a minimum population of 1,000 people to serve people in its jurisdiction. This plan was approved in 1942 by the British appointed Commission, which was assisted helped by another timely grant of \$10,000 in 1940 from the Carnegie Corporation to purchase books. This scheme proved to be successful and included larger towns such as Corner Brook. All this progress can be traced back to the Amulree Report, the beneficence of the Carnegie Corporation, and the dedicated work of local citizens.

The Amulree Report was a crucial catalyst for improved public library services. Although it gave only fleeting reference to libraries and was not similar to the typical Canadian library survey or report on the development of services in the 1930s, its impact was evident. As a result, the Commission style government era was a key incubation period for the public library system before Newfoundland became a Canadian province in 1949.

Further reading:

Jesse Mifflin, *The Development of Public Library Services in Newfoundland, 1934-1972*. Halifax: Dalhousie University Libraries and School of Library Service, 1978.

The entire Amulree Report is available at the Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage website -- [The Newfoundland Royal Commission, 1933](#) as a PDF.

[An Act to Create a Public Libraries Board](#) approved on 22 January 1935 is available at the Memorial University Digital Archive (commencing at original page 28).

The documentation for the lapsed Carnegie promise of \$50,000 to St. John's in 1901 is [at this link](#).

The article by Jennifer J. Connor documenting the Grenfell Mission's provision of reading material to coastal communities is [at this link](#).

My blog on the regional studies of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island is [at this link](#).

This blog was revised with updated information and links on November 6, 2025

Wednesday, December 03, 2014

The Public Library in Canada in Relation to the Government (1939) by Jean E. Stewart.

The Public Library in Canada in Relation to the Government by Jean E. Stewart. Chicago: Fellowships and Scholarships Committee of the American Library Association under the direction of the Graduate Library School, University of Chicago, 1939. 106 p. and map.

Vancouver Sun 4 June 1938



Following the completion of a number of Canadian library studies during the Great Depression, there was increasing interest in the formation and development of library services, especially for public libraries. The need for better planning at the political level, stable tax-based financing, improved staffing, increased coordination, and a broader perspective applied to services was more evident. Academic interest in library aspects related to the social sciences was also beginning to develop. The Dominion Bureau of Statistics had collected and published information on the growth of library service for a decade-and-a-half. Now, the opportunity to analyze libraries rested on a firmer basis. The observational approach used by John Ridington, George Locke, and Mary Black in their national 1933 report, *Libraries in Canada*, would no longer satisfy most planning needs. Stewart's work marked the increasing use of statistics in library studies and American interest in Canadian developments.

In 1938, a young graduate from the University of British Columbia, Jean Eileen Stewart (BA 1927), originally from Alberta, undertook a study on the Canadian public library in relation to federal, provincial, and municipal jurisdictions. After

enrolling in the McGill University Library School in 1927, Stewart successfully graduated in 1928 and then worked for several years in British Columbia libraries, first as an assistant librarian in the Kitsilano Public Library branch (1931–32), then as a librarian in Nanaimo Municipal Library from 1932–36, before becoming the first director of the new Vancouver Island Union Library when it opened in 1936. Although she had trained at McGill, to bolster her credentials she went to the United States after receiving a Carnegie fellowship from the American Library Association in 1938. Her work was directed by academics at the University of Chicago Graduate Library School, a leading institution in more formal library science research.

The resulting report, ***The Public Library in Relation to Government***, appeared exactly when Canada entered the Second World War, in September 1939. Consequently, Stewart's report was never really distributed or cited to any extent. In retrospect, however, much of her work remains of value in terms of understanding the Canadian public library in the first part of the 20th century. But her career in libraries ended suddenly. In 1940, Jean Stewart returned to British Columbia and married a teacher, William J. Mouat. At the time, women were required to "retire" and open a position for another person. Stewart continued in libraries by doing volunteer work in her home towns. She died in 1981 at Abbotsford, B.C.

The Stewart Report, 1939

What did Stewart set out to do? She investigated 37 public libraries across Canada, all over 30,000 population except for Verdun, Three Rivers, and Quebec City for which she was not able to find data. In her own words:

In an analysis of governmental relations of public libraries in Canada, an effort will be made to find answers to certain questions: (1) What is the relationship between the library and the provincial government? (2) What place does the library take in municipal government? (3) What are the advantages and disadvantages of the library board system or control? (4) What

are the possibilities in the development of larger units or library service? (p. 7)

In her first chapters, Stewart documented the historical and legal development of public libraries finding that they closely followed British and American patterns, i.e. libraries were enabled, not mandated, by legislative provisions at the local and provincial levels. The Canadian situation was simpler than the US where home rule municipalities and special charters complicated planning at the state level. Later chapters included information on corporate and association libraries (e.g. in Montreal), board managed municipal libraries (especially in Ontario), and larger units of service (the union libraries and regional demonstrations in BC, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island). Stewart relied on DBS data but also received various responses to a questionnaire she mailed out to in 1938. She presented this information in several tables sprinkled in her report. With respect to municipal-library relationships, she found that boards with active members were often influential in promoting services. Only two cities, Westmount and Winnipeg, used committees of council to administer libraries.

The final two chapters summarized most of her findings. With regard to the expansion of regional systems in Canadian provinces Stewart found many basics -- for example public demand for services -- lacking. "The first steps in regionalism in Canada must be to stimulate and integrate existing institutions, and to extend library service to districts where it is completely lacking." (p. 94) The regional model was clearly an important feature for future planning. As well, Stewart commented that "Library affairs should be administered by a distinct branch of a government department, and, according to general opinion, the provincial departments of education should be given this responsibility. A trained staff should be maintained in this department to supervise, co-ordinate, and direct public library affairs in the province." (p. 99) Stewart's findings and assessments would prove accurate for the most part during the postwar era of public library development in Canada.

The Public Library in Canada remained unpublished. Like other Canadian reports that appeared during WWII (e.g., Gordon Gourlay's 1942 University of Michigan AMLS thesis, "The role of Canadian Public Libraries in Adult Education" and the Rockefeller Foundation "Report on Canadian Libraries" in 1941 by Charles F. McCombs, a New York city public librarian) it found a space to rest on some office shelves. Eventually, a few copies made their way into academic libraries. Stewart's work disappeared from view, but it was not entirely forgotten. Today, along with other Depression-era studies, it continues to be an important resource for understanding early twentieth century public libraries in different parts of our country. Stewart's use of national based statistics and her own survey methods marked another step forward in Canadian library studies.

My blog on the study on public libraries and adult education by Gordon Gourlay in 1942 is [at this link](#).

My blog on the Charles McCombs report on Canadian libraries in 1941 is [at this link](#).

Friday, October 10, 2014

Alfred Fitzpatrick and the Beginning of Ontario's Travelling Libraries, 1900-05

Ontario's Travelling Libraries began modestly and developed over six decades before the system was wound down in the 1960s when new ways to reach rural and isolated readers became prevalent. Although travelling libraries were not uncommon at the turn of the twentieth century, the Ontario Department of Education was at first reluctant to engage in this type of work. Its officials preferred to reach rural localities through schools and encourage "association libraries" (requiring small fees for membership) for adults. However, a new Minister, Richard Harcourt, struck a new course in 1900, influenced by Alfred Fitzpatrick, the founder of Frontier College. Fitzpatrick was a force to be reckoned with and almost single-handedly was responsible for the inauguration of this type of service in Ontario, first in the region of "New Ontario," the vast area north of Muskoka and Lake Superior that extended to the Manitoba border before the First World War.



You can read about Fitzpatrick's drive to establish "reading camps" in Northern Ontario and his interaction with Harcourt's department in my article just published in *Historical Studies in Education / Revue d'histoire de l'éducation*. After a half decade, Fitzpatrick reoriented his efforts to eventually establish Frontier College, but small libraries remained part of his broader vision to

provide learning opportunities for adults along Canadian frontier areas. A précis follows and the complete article is available for consultation online at [*Historical Studies in Education*](#).

In 1900, the Ontario Department of Education and Alfred Fitzpatrick engaged in an experiment to supply books to reading camps for lumber, mining, and railway workers in Northern Ontario. The center-periphery interplay between education officials and Fitzpatrick gave birth to two important adult education agencies: Frontier College and Ontario's travelling library system. Although the Department partially accepted Fitzpatrick's original plan for library extension, he garnered enough public support and employer endorsements to leverage government action on key issues related to a systematic book supply, the reduction of illiteracy, and non-formal adult learning techniques. This paper uses primary sources to examine the differing objectives held by Fitzpatrick and the Department during their initial joint venture prior to the Ontario election of 1905. The study highlights why travelling libraries became a provincial responsibility; as well, it shows Fitzpatrick reshaped his original plans by practical interactions with resource workers that led to new approaches for adult learning at the outset of the 20th century.

Wednesday, October 01, 2014

Three British Columbia Public Library Commission Reports, 1927–41

British Columbia Public Library Commission. *British Columbia Library Survey 1927–28, Conducted Under the Auspices of British Columbia Public Library Commission*. Victoria: Printed by C. F. Banfield, Printer to the King, 1929.

British Columbia Public Library Commission. *Libraries in British Columbia 1940; a Reconsideration of the Library Survey of 1927–28*. Victoria: Printed by C. F. Banfield, Printer to the King, 1941.

British Columbia Public Library Commission. *A Preliminary Study of Adult Education in British Columbia, 1941. A Contribution to the Problem*. Prepared by a Special Committee of the Public Library Commission: H. Norman Lidster, C. K. Morison, John Ridington, E. S. Robinson, Chairman. Victoria: 1942.

While I have concentrated on national and regional library surveys during the Great Depression in the past few blogs, it would be gross omission if the efforts of the British Columbia Public Library Commission throughout this period was not highlighted. In 1919, a revision of the BC Public Libraries Act provided for a three-member commission to supervise public library services and to administer the Provincial library grant to libraries. The relatively independent commission form of library oversight was not uncommon in the United States, but in Canada, where the Ontario Library Association had failed to develop a similar scheme before WWI, it was unique. The Commission conducted a travelling library service and a books by mail (open shelf) service to individuals. By the 1920s the

Commission was operating a small budget of about \$20,000. It was at this point that the commissioners, led by Dr. Norman F. Black, set out to discover the state of province-wide library service. With a generous \$6,000 grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the commission employed Clarence B. Lester, from the Wisconsin library commission, as an adviser for a thorough study--the first of its kind in twentieth century Canada.

The British Columbia Library Survey, 1927–28

The *British Columbia Library Survey 1927–28* provided a detailed report of more than 100 pages on library conditions and responses from residents. More than twenty appendices recorded information on issues such as sea-coast libraries, the open shelf system, services for the blind, school libraries, vocational services, and library training. The key recommendations focused on direct services, namely (a) the use of library districts, created specially for this purpose, in rural communities and (b) the provision of school library service as part of a unified library system. In this scenario, regional library systems would provide services for a combination of school districts, municipalities, unorganized rural communities, and even individuals. When the report was tabled in 1929, it was an obvious that the potential of regional/district library service (the "union library" concept) could only be demonstrated through an actual project.

The 1927–28 survey findings were used to secure \$100,000 from the Carnegie Corporation and to employ Helen Gordon Stewart, Victoria's chief librarian, to conduct a demonstration in the Fraser Valley beginning in 1930. This project is ably described and analyzed by Maxine Rochester, "Bringing Librarianship to Rural Canada in the 1930s: Demonstrations by Carnegie Corporation of New York," *Libraries & Culture: A Journal of Library History* 30 (1995): 366-90. But it was the report itself that was the crucial catalyst for action because it contained copious factual information, especially statistics, which could not be garnered elsewhere (even in the Dominion Bureau of

Statistics publication, *Survey of Libraries*) that bolstered its conclusions and recommendations. The Fraser Valley experiment served as precedent that led to further Carnegie grants on the Atlantic coast in the mid-1930s. This 'second wave' of Carnegie library grants in the 1930s encouraged the growth of libraries at a time when public funding for libraries edged towards impoverishment rather than improvement across Canada.

PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

LIBRARIES
IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.
1940

A RECONSIDERATION OF THE LIBRARY
SURVEY OF 1927-28

BRITISH COLUMBIA PUBLIC LIBRARY COMMISSION

H. NORMAN LINTON, New Westminster, Chairman,
JIM REDDEN, Vancouver,
E. S. RICHMOND, Vancouver,
C. R. HARRIS, Victoria, Secretary.



PRINTED BY THE PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA, 1940.
Printed by the Province of British Columbia, 1940.

After four years of successful operation and after Carnegie funding ended in 1934, BC residents in twenty communities voted to continue the Fraser Valley project with local taxes. With the success of the Fraser Valley demonstration came the need to expand and upgrade library services. The Commission was able to promote the development of two more

"union library" systems as they were known on Vancouver Island and in the Okanagan Valley.

Report on Libraries in British Columbia, 1940

As the effects of the Depression lessened in 1938, the Commission began to review progress on a five-year basis. It undertook an extensive review of the 1927-28 report with a view of identifying successes and problems that had occurred during the intervening decade. On balance, the new report, *Libraries in British Columbia 1940*, concluded the original principles and policies of the first report should continue to constitute the foundation of provincial organization to further book service in BC. The 1940 report, however, emphasized the idea of centralized coordination for professional library training,

standards of service for different sized communities, and enlarged powers for the Library Commission to distribute grants to all libraries achieving standard provincial requirements. The report lamented that libraries in larger centres--Burnaby and North Vancouver--were being operated and funded by voluntary associations and located in downtown shops. With Canada at war against the Axis powers, the report intoned that library services should be mandated and that "democracy must be intelligent" to succeed in "winning the peace" as well as the war. But wartime austerity and priorities pushed the commission report onto the shelf rather than the field of action.

Report on Adult Education, 1941

Not to be idle and considering that postwar planning was essential, the same commissioners (Norman Lidster, C. K. Morison, the indefatigable John Ridington, and E. S. Robinson) undertook another wartime study, *A Preliminary Study of Adult Education in British Columbia, 1941* for the Minister of Education. They were charged to survey the existing state of adult education across BC and to submit suggestions and recommendations for its development.

The Commission studied formal provincial, federal, and municipal agencies working with adults in various capacities--boards of health, departments of agriculture, educational bodies, police schools, museums, forestry programs, and youth training--as well as the Extension Department of the University of British Columbia which was praised by the commissioners. Numerous civil society organizations were mailed questionnaires: art galleries, musical and literary societies, boards of trade, cooperatives, credit unions, student and study groups, newspapers, radio stations, crafts organizations, etc. National organizations, e.g. the Workers' Educational Association and CNIB were noted although Frontier College was a notable omission. The study called for a provincial program of Adult Education comparable to the public school system. The potential of radio broadcasting was highlighted. The work of public

libraries also received favourable comment--the public library was designated as a "principal agency."

The survey's basic recommendation: the need for the provincial government to authorize a coordinating authority, the Department of Education, to establish a central adult education division under a director. Then, it would be possible to form a Council of Adult Education to determine policy with the Director for appropriate plans, standards, grants, advisory work, and necessary operating services for the entire province. An underlying wartime ideal of democratic progress once peace was attained often appeared in the study's pages. It was a broad appeal, but one that did not stimulate the government to take immediate action. As a result, the linkage between libraries and adult education remained tenuous in the postwar period, a situation not uncommon in the rest of Canada. In postwar BC, the extension service of UBC would head up adult education efforts.

Nonetheless, the three studies encompassing the Depression years stand out as positive statements for the development of libraries and their connection with the emerging field of adult education. At a time when Canadians' appreciation for the arts, adult education, and library science was influenced more by parsimonious economic considerations and wartime challenges and austerity, the reports and work of the Library Commission were vital statements of "what should be" infused with bold rhetoric and factual material that fortified its arguments. On the Canadian library stage in the first part of the twentieth century, they stand out as important historical markers in the development of libraries and librarianship.

The *British Columbia Library Survey 1927–28* is available for viewing at the [Hathi Trust](#).

A Preliminary Study of Adult Education in British Columbia, 1941 is available for viewing via the [Hathi Trust](#).

Libraries in British Columbia 1940; a Reconsideration of the Library Survey of 1927-28 is also available at the [Hathi Trust](#).

Marjorie C . Holmes, ***Library Service in British Columbia; a Brief History of its Development*** (Victoria, 1959)

*This blog was updated with new information and links on
November 8, 2025*

Tuesday, June 24, 2014

Four Canadian Maritime Library Surveys in the Great Depression

Gerhard Lomer, *Report on a Proposed Three-year Demonstration of Library Service for Prince Edward Island*. Montreal: McGill University Library, 1932. 52 p., illus, folding plan.

Nora Bateson, *The Carnegie Library Demonstration in Prince Edward Island, Canada, 1933-1936*. Charlottetown: Prince Edward Island Libraries, 1936. 52 p., illus. with an Appendix: The Public Library Act (assented to April 4, 1935; p. 50-52).

Nora Bateson, *Library Survey of Nova Scotia*. Halifax, Department of Education, 1938. 40 p., map; with an Appendix: An act to provide for the support of regional libraries: p. 40.

Nova Scotia Regional Libraries Commission, *Libraries for Nova Scotia*, 2nd rev. ed. Halifax: the Commission, 1940. 12 p.

The Depression in Maritime Canada presented enormous obstacles to library development. This period did, however, spur important new thinking about how public library services could be established and maintained by public funds and management. As the national survey and report funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, *Libraries in Canada*, proceeded after 1930, it became evident that regional demonstrations might better serve as a stimulus and program for future courses of action. The commissioners, John Ridington, George Locke, and Mary J.L. Black, suggested that Prince Edward Island would be an ideal area for such a testing ground for public library service.

The McGill Report on Prince Edward Island by Gerhard Lomer, 1932

Accordingly, The Corporation, under the presidency of Frederick P. Keppel, requested Dr. Gerhard Lomer, the library director of McGill University, to visit P.E.I. and give a second opinion on the issue. Although Lomer only spent a short time on the island in September 1932, he produced a detailed typewritten assessment of current services and facilities, talked with a variety of officials, critiqued operations such as the provincial School Days program for libraries, indicated potential sites for development, and even provided an up-to-date bibliography of regional services. While his work was not as extensive as an earlier Canadian report, *British Columbia Library Service 1927-1928* (Victoria, 1929), Lomer provided practical details on organization and offered a program suited to Islanders' needs which explained regional service and showed how it could be put into action by a three-year demonstration of province-wide public library service. His report recommended that provincial education department take the lead in organizing a demonstration and training branch personnel. Part of Prince of Wales College could be used as headquarters.

Lomer's astute observations, plus personal interest on the part of P.E.I.'s premier, W.J.P. MacMillan, were persuasive factors in the subsequent announcement by the Carnegie Corporation in January 1933 that it would grant \$75,000 for an endowment for the Prince of Wales College (destroyed by fire in 1931) and also \$60,000 to start up a provincial library demonstration. Nora Bateson, M.A., a staff member at the McGill library school, who had worked in Canada's first regional demonstration in the Fraser Valley, B.C., got the nod to head the demonstration in P.E.I.

Nora Bateson and the Carnegie Prince Edward Island Demonstration, 1933–36

Bateson's activities from 1933 to 1936 were later documented in her report, *Carnegie Library Demonstration in Prince Edward*

Island. She began work out of Charlottetown in June 1933. A few branches were set up; then, Bateson began the arduous task of promoting services at group meetings and presentations across the island. She drove a modified car that could carry 300 books in shelves fitted onto the rear of her auto to give people a sense of the type of books that could be provided by a central service. Her report details how coordinated action functioned to establish branch libraries, create book lists, and refresh school libraries with good reading. It also highlights the parts played by the two main libraries at Charlottetown and Summerside as well as Women's Institutes in remoter area. Throughout the first years, Bateson was the catalyst for improved services.



PEI Chevrolet bookmobile c.1935

There were 41,000 volumes in the main collection by 1935 with 23,517 registered borrowers--about 35% of the population. The 1935 annual circulation was 261,029. Because of the success of the demonstration, The Corporation provided additional funds and the government authorized library legislation creating a provincial library commission in April 1935. However, after the next provincial election, this Act was repealed by the new government, partly on the grounds that funding should be administered directly instead of by an appointed Commission. The report deals with legislative activity at the end (pp. 38-42).

The Prince Edward Island Libraries demonstration showed the

potential for success of a province-wide library service. As well, the report offered interesting insights on the relationship of libraries and adult education. Nora Bateson had become acquainted with the library extension efforts of St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, and begun to apply similar methods with the demonstration's study groups. A short chapter on this work indicates the variety of meetings and activities in particular Island subjects such as fox-farming, oyster culture, co-operation, and fishing. As well, the report concluded with comments on regional libraries that might be applied in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

In June 1936, the demonstration ended and the libraries that had been created came under the direction of the Dept. of Education with limited funding in succeeding years. Unpublished records relating to the reading habits of participants in the successful creation of branches to reach people were digested and reported later in 1940. In retrospect, *The Carnegie Library Demonstration* documented a systematic scheme of library promotion and provided a blueprint for action as well as data that could be used for research purposes in [*A Regional Library and Its Readers*](#) issued in 1940. Nevertheless, Bateson's report became the basis for library development on the Island until the 1960s ushered in change.

Nora Bateson and the Nova Scotia Libraries, 1937–38

In the adjacent province of Nova Scotia, the Superintendent of Education, Henry F. Munro, and Dr. James Tompkins, the founder of the Antigonish Movement, were anxious to establish better library service, especially in Cape Breton. Father Tompkins, together with Nora Bateson, issued a pamphlet—*Why Not a Co-operative Library?*—to convince Nova Scotians that a public library system could be built at a reasonable cost and operate effectively. They opined,

The public library has no rigid definition of education: it is as interested in accommodating the man who wants to build a well-

lighted, well-ventilated barn, or a woman who wants information on hooked-rug designs, as in satisfying the needs of the student of Shakespeare. Its idea of education is to take hold of people where they are, satisfying needs and meeting their interests and to let them develop on their own lines.

In response, in 1938, the provincial government agreed to sponsor a survey targeting existing conditions, facilities, regional systems, and suggesting a plan for future service.

Nora Bateson was the logical choice to conduct the survey. A half-decade before, *Libraries in Canada* had scant praise for Nova Scotia libraries. In September-October 1937, Bateson found little change. The Citizens Free Library in Halifax lacked staff, finances, accommodation, and needed to be run on "up-to-date professional lines." She found much the same situation in Sydney. The majority of colleges and universities had less than 500 students and small collections. Library extension programs at Acadia and St. Francis Xavier were bright spots. There were 300,000 books in school libraries. Bateson concluded: "It seems reasonable to suppose that when the possibilities of public library service ... is made known, the numerous organizations which have already shown their interest will combine to lift libraries in Nova Scotia out of the amateur class and put them on an efficient professional basis."

To complete her report, Bateson highlighted the state of current library issues—adult readers, children's services, the need for trained librarians and staff, typical service costs, and county and regional organization that had been demonstrated in B.C. and P.E.I. A suggested plan for public library service was put forward: (1) appointed public library commissioners with authority to hire a director and oversee library development; (2) county or regional libraries funded locally with provincial aid and managed by district boards; (3) a library system for Cape Breton with headquarters at Sydney' and (4) improved provincial public library legislation. Nova Scotia already had an enabling

Act (1937) to permit regional libraries, but no provision for commissioners, a library director, or designated powers. After considering the report, a new Act was passed in summer 1938 and Bateson hired as library Director of Libraries for Nova Scotia.

To promote and establish libraries, Bateson realized public relations and accurate information was essential. Thus, the small pamphlet, *Libraries for Nova Scotia*, began to make a regular appearance in hamlets, villages, and towns across the province. This booklet went through various printings before 1945. It included brief outlines on topics such as "Why We Need Libraries," "Information," "Books as Wage Earners," "Leisure-Time Reading," "Country-Wide Library Services," and "Nova Scotia." Because the Second World War intervened, Bateson and her staff spent years assisting the Canadian Legion in providing books to the armed forces in the Maritime region. Library expansion in Nova Scotia would have to wait another decade for the plans formulated in *Library Survey of Nova Scotia* could be realized.

The regional surveys conducted in P.E.I. and Nova Scotia during the hard years of the Great Depression showed the success of coordinated library services and value of mobilizing public acceptance to advance libraries. The Carnegie funded projects presented a regional perspective in contrast to the national study, *Libraries in Canada*, which had detected little interest in libraries. The two studies clearly indicated there was a latent need and potential for public support when energetic efforts were made to introduce better collections and services on a regional scale. Unfortunately, economic conditions and the realities of wartime Canada blunted immediate efforts to implement the ideas presented by Nora Bateson and others. Associated library legislation was incomplete or lacking to permit the formation of county or regional entities for libraries. Potential aids, such as

bookmobiles, were ruled out due to transportation difficulties during winter and were not available at this point.

Yet, these reports were vital additions that charted library development and served as a basis for eventual library improvements in the Maritimes after the Second World War. Nora Bateson continued to promote regional services and used her knowledge of rural Canadian conditions to author *Rural Canada Needs Libraries* in 1944. Together, with other studies in the west and at the national level, they marked a new era in planning for library service.

Further reading:

Violet L. Coughlin, *Larger Units of Public Library Service in Canada; With Particular Reference to the Provinces of Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick*. Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1968

Sue Adams, "[Our Activist Past: Nora Bateson, Champion of Regional Libraries](#)," in *Partnership: the Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research* 4, no. 1 (2009). [accessed 2014-06-24]

Maxine K. Rochester, "Bringing Librarianship to Rural Canada in the 1930s: Demonstrations by Carnegie Corporation of New York," *Libraries & Culture: a Journal of Library History* 30 (1995): 366-90.

[Nora Bateson](#) biography at the Ex Libris Association site [accessed 2022-06-24]

My blog on books and reading in Prince Edward Island, *A Regional Library and Its Readers* (1940), is [at this link](#).

My blog on [Rural Canada Needs Libraries](#) (1944) by Nora Bateson.

Tuesday, May 20, 2014

Angus Mowat and Ontario's Rural Libraries, 1937–40

Well, after years of research, I have published something on Angus Mowat, Ontario's irrepressible Inspector (later Director) of Public Libraries for three decades. And in the spring 2014 issue of ***Ontario History***, a favourite regional journal for professional and local historians alike.

Updated, June 2023: the entire article is now available at Érudit, an important Quebec non-profit publisher at this link:

<https://www.erudit.org/en/journals/onhistory/2014-v106-n1-onhistory03916/1050722ar/>

“An Inspector Calls: Angus Mowat and Ontario's Rural



Angus Mowat, 1940

Libraries, 1937-40,” ***Ontario History*** (Spring 2014, vol. CVI, no. 1) covers a short period just before the Second World War when Angus Mowat began his lengthy career in the Ontario civil service. Mowat was an inspirational voice for public library work during the Great Depression. In 1937, after he became the

Inspector of Public Libraries in the Ontario Department of Education, he helped revive spirits and raise service ambitions in smaller libraries. Building on the ‘modern library’ concept popularized in Ontario after World War I, he re-energized trustees, librarians, and library workers with hundreds of visits to promote local efforts in the immediate prewar period. His inspections encompassed the advisement of trustees on management and financial processes; the promotion of librarianship and staff training; the development of adult and

children's collections; the reorganization of functional building space; the formation of county systems; and support for new school curriculum reading reforms. Mowat's wide-ranging inspection method not only brought renewed optimism it laid the groundwork for genuine progress in the provincial public library system after 1945.

During the waning depression era of the late 1930s, Mowat travelled to all parts of the province encouraging library development and making many friends. Unquestionably, he stimulated thought about enhanced services and helped libraries cope at a critical time. When his army duty (1940-44) ended, he resumed inspections with his usual enthusiasm; however, his term as Inspector ended when he became Director of Public Libraries in 1948. The regime of library inspections lingered into the 1950s, but Mowat's new title signified his expanded role in advancing provincial policies, financing, and legislation for Ontario's public library 'system.' By the time he retired in 1960, a colourful, personal period in Ontario's public library organization had given way to more systematic, modern administration.

The article covers (1) Depression Era Public Library Service; (2) The Beginning of Inspections in Summer 1937; (3) Library Boards and Trusteeship; (4) Librarianship and Collections; (5) Library Accommodation and Buildings; (6) Library Cooperation; and (7) The End of Inspections in Summer 1940. Mowat's ups and downs in rural Ontario took many turns! Mowat was a library enthusiast for sure -- an administrator with an eye to the irreverent, but always able to cast a serious judgement or offer sage advice when necessary. By the time of his retirement party in 1960 at the Park Plaza, public libraries had undergone many changes and, although he retained many older ideas about how to do things, he was not averse to try something new.

In recognition of Mowat's efforts, a provincial award, the **Angus Mowat Award of Excellence**, recognizes a commitment to excellence in the delivery of Ontario public library service. The

award is made annually for services that can be old, new, and ongoing

Wednesday, January 15, 2014

A Regional Library and Its Readers (1940): Libraries and Reading in Prince Edward Island

A Regional Library and Its Readers; A Study of Five Years of Rural Reading by H. B. Chandler and J.T. Croteau. New York: American Association for Adult Education, 1940. 136 p. tables, charts, and index.

When it first appeared, in 1940, after the outbreak of the Second World War, ***A Regional Library and Its Readers*** received little notice in Canadian library circles. Peacetime energies were being redirected to the nation's war effort and the establishment of military-camp libraries. An academic publication by the Director of Prince Edward Island Libraries (Henry Chandler) and a college professor (John Croteau) at Charlottetown's St. Dunstan's University surely was not cause for detailed discussion, especially if it was published in New York. It was an American review in the July issue of *Library Quarterly* that best recognized this innovative Canadian study's linkage of library circulation with the reading habits of rural Prince Edward Islanders and noted the trend to apply more scientific social science methodology to library activity.

Already, in the United States, a few library reading studies had appeared, notably an urban study by the Borough of Queen Public Library, New York, *Woodside Does Read* (1935), that presented statistical tables of responses to many questions posed to library readers. In the United Kingdom, more informal library reading responses were being captured in a few localities by volunteer observers participating in the Mass Observation project that sought to record everyday life in Britain beginning in 1937. In British Columbia, the Fraser Valley regional library

demonstration gathered reading information after it commenced operations in 1930, but its results were not published or readily accessible. In retrospect, the data collected and analysis published by Chandler and Croteau compares favourably to its contemporary Anglo-American-Canadian counterparts despite some shortcomings noted by *Library Quarterly*.

The Regional Library and Its Readers Study

What did Chandler and Croteau set out to do? Following the Carnegie funded regional library demonstration headed by Nora Bateson from 1933-36, the PEI government decided to carry on with the regional (actually provincial) library concept. Bateson's success had certainly given an affirmative reply to questions about the utility of regional libraries. Chandler and Croteau, using data gathered during the project and subsequent years, investigated an entirely different area -- the reading Islanders were doing. About 25,000 people borrowed a million books between 1933-38 and Chandler-Croteau, with the help of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics and PEI news and magazine agents, used the collected data extensively. They asked: who read library books? what did people read? which occupational groups made most use of the library? were there changes in reading habits during the five-year period, 1934-38? All these queries were new areas for exploration in Canadian library research.

Despite the innovative work in PEI, *A Regional Library* did not receive much attention in library histories until Maxine Rochester, "Bringing Librarianship to Rural Canada in the 1930s," *Libraries & Culture* 30, 4 (1995), 366-90 revisited library efforts in Depression era rural Canada and provided additional analysis in conjunction with the Fraser Valley project. These library projects were complementary to adult education activities, such as the formation of reading clubs. Rochester concluded:

The demonstrations had shown that there was an enormous book hunger in the rural areas, and that once a library service sufficiently financed and of an adequate population base was developed on a trial basis, the citizens were willing to pay for such a service through their taxes. The demonstrations dispelled any assumptions about reading interests of rural people being less sophisticated than people living in cities.

Re-reading *A Regional Library* can offer many insights. The chapter on Fiction Reading, for example, demonstrated the traditional desire by librarians to circulate the "best books." Library fiction was classed in three categories -- classics and "first-rate modern novels;" modern novels judged to be above the "usual run of fiction;" and lighter reading (mysteries, romances, westerns, etc.). The first two classes comprised 50% of library fiction stock and accounted for 16% of the total fiction circulation. The "lighter" novels (50% of the fiction total) accounted for 84% of the circulation. However, like all lists, one might question the categorization of authors: the book's appendix shows that Lucy Maud Montgomery, Raymond Knister, Joyce Cary, Booth Tarkington, and Jules Verne were just a few of novelists consigned to the lighter class that readers obviously preferred.

A Regional Library provides many interesting facts about rural PEI in the 1930s and adult education activities. Over a period of five years more than a quarter of the total island population registered at libraries to borrow books. Students and housewives comprised the largest number of library card holders -- almost 50 percent but the study concluded that educational attainment, not age or sex, was the prime factor for reading. After five years, total circulation annually reached about 250,000 for a population of 94,000, a significant stimulus to book use in a region where there were few bookstores and formal education usually stopped at junior high school (grades 8-10). Chandler and Croteau's work, in conjunction with Nora Bateson's two provincial east-coast works, *The Carnegie Library Demonstration in Prince*

Edward Island, Canada, 1933-1936 (1936) and *Library Survey of Nova Scotia* (1938), clearly documented that libraries could make important societal contributions when organized in an efficient and cost-effective manner. These studies, together with others conducted during the Depression, formed a foundation for future growth of regional libraries across Canada.

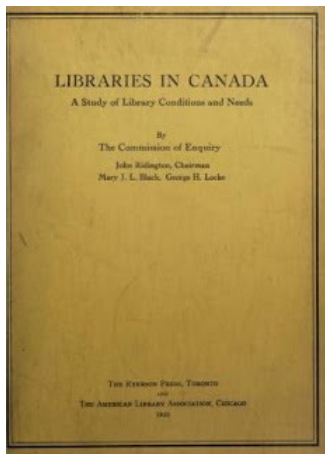
An online full-text version is now available from the [Hathi Trust](#) without any restrictions.

My blog on the library studies in the Maritimes during the 1930s is [at this link](#).

Sunday, December 01, 2013

Libraries in Canada: The Commission of Enquiry Creates a National Perspective on Libraries, 1930–1933

Libraries in Canada: A Study of Library Conditions and Needs by John Ridington, chair; Mary J. L. Black, and George H. Locke. Toronto: Ryerson Press; and Chicago: American Library Association, 1933. 153 p. index.



In the spring of 1933, thousands of printed copies of Canada's first national survey of libraries were delivered to the offices of newspaper and magazine editors; school and university officials; federal, provincial and municipal politicians; as well as librarians and trustees. It marked the culmination of three years of work by Carnegie-funded commissioners who had traversed Canada in 1930 at the outset of the Great Depression. Led by John Ridington, the chief librarian of the University of British Columbia, the Commission, which included George H. Locke (Toronto) and Mary J.L. Black (Fort William), had sought to ascertain the state of Canadian libraries and made recommendations to improve conditions. The three commissioners were primarily interested in public libraries but also included chapters on government and universities and colleges.

How was the report received? What impact did ***Libraries in Canada*** have? A case can be made that it influenced library development for many years and was a landmark Canadian study

that set a standard for library reports, briefs, and planning documents in the era before social science techniques and data gathering took hold in library and information science.

According to one American reviewer in *The Library Quarterly*, Ridington, Black, and Locke had produced a “human story” about library progress (or lack thereof) and aspirations for future growth that might inspire contemporaries to attain higher standards and to provide a blueprint for planning. A friend of Ridington, Edgar Robinson, noted that “tangible results,” in the form of Carnegie funding for a regional demonstration in Prince Edward Island, were already in evidence. Decades later, the Canadian librarian who has provided the most extensive study on the work of the Commission, Basil Stuart-Stubbs, described its report as a “vision document” that spoke to the community at large and realized its vision decades later—the establishment of a national library, regional libraries, improved public library legislation, published standards, better funding, and library extension to underserved populations (estimated to be about 80% in the study). Even a national library association, which the commissioners advocated but felt impossible to establish in the Depression, would eventually be formed in 1946. None of the commissioners lived to see their ideas realized: Locke died in 1937, Mary Black in 1939, and Ridington in 1945.

Libraries in Canada (LIC) attracted some modest press and magazine attention in 1933. City newspapers naturally focused on local conditions, seldom mentioning national goals. A *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* editorial on March 14th indicated the lowly state of library service in many regions of Canada might come as a shock to those who were comfortable with present service levels. It noted the three basic improvements the Commission advocated: (1) the development of larger administrative units of service or cooperation between urban-rural libraries in regions; (2) the extension of services via branches, bookmobiles, etc; and (3) the need for professional

management under provincial legislation. On March 25th, the *Toronto Globe* lamented that the report offered up a general “discouraging picture” and editorialized that Canadians were “book hungry.” Most papers, such as the *Montreal Gazette*, highlighted comments about local conditions: it reported “Parish Libraries Plan Commended,” on March 15th and followed with “[McGill] Library School is Doing Great Work,” on March 16th. The April and May issues of the *Canadian Bookman* and *Canadian Forum* also commented briefly on the work of the surveyors for their readers.

The Study of Libraries in Canada

While explicit ‘next steps’ and tangible results were not immediately forthcoming, the Commissioners' ideas were sketched on a national canvas for the first time through provincial studies. At a time when the few provincial library associations that existed were small in membership, *LIC* prompted Canadian librarians and educators to rise above parochial thinking. After *LIC* suggested reduction of postal subsidies for book loans by mail, British Columbia and Ontario librarians reiterated this position in Briefs to the Dominion government's study on federal-provincial relations (the Rowell-Sirois Report) a few years later in 1938. A special postal “book rate” became reality in 1939 and still exists in a different form today. Although *LIC* admitted formation of a national association of librarians was not feasible during the Great Depression, halting steps, led first by John Ridington, were undertaken to form a national body with support from A.L.A in 1934. Eventually, a national association came into being in 1946.

After the Second World War, the concept of regional libraries, successfully demonstrated in B.C. and Prince Edward Island in the 1930s and frequently recommended by the commissioners as a remedy to small uncoordinated community libraries, took hold across the country. *LIC* strongly suggested the need for a national library service headed by a Dominion librarian who

would take the lead in organizing all federal library collections. In Ottawa, the Dominion Library would establish a union catalogue of federal library holdings and receive all works that come to Canada under the Copyright Act. As a result, the Parliamentary Library would concentrate on its primary legislative purpose, i.e., serving federal members of Parliament. Eventually, in 1953, federal legislation established the basis of a national library and a new building opened in 1967.

LIC commended the work of the library schools at McGill and Toronto universities. The idea of "modern methods" in libraries necessitated well-trained staff:

So the modern public librarian came into being, with the present interpretation of library service, namely, that a library is not simply a building, nor is it a collection of books only; it is a public service, whereby the right book is brought to the right reader at the least cost, by a person who has been trained for the work.

Where such a trained librarian is in charge of a suitable collection of books, a community has the right to expect that at least a third of the population are regular borrowers, and that five books per capita are read annually. (p.9-10)

In time, by the late 1960s, the establishment of more library schools and library education along with the development of library standards was firmly implanted. To be sure, many improvements in public libraries, especially the need for better provincial legislation, can be traced to *LIC*, in part because the report was brought to the attention of many decision-makers such as Quebec Premier, Louis-Alexandre Taschereau, and the Prime Minister, William Lyon Mackenzie King. While the Commission could be faulted for not doing more extensive work on university-college libraries and school libraries, few could argue that the \$10,000 Carnegie grant was not well spent.



Fraser Valley book van c.1935

Further, *Libraries in Canada* pointed the way to conducting more published analysis on library problems, especially on a geographic basis. Previous studies, especially in British Columbia, had focused mostly on specific provincial concerns, such as establishment of a regional library in the Fraser Valley and bookmobile service. Now a national study unveiled and legitimized ideas—principles, even—that could be developed on a broader basis. Studies in the later 1930s such as Nora Bateson's two works, *Carnegie Library Demonstration in Prince Edward Island* (Charlottetown, 1936) and *Library Survey of Nova Scotia* (Halifax, 1938); Norma W. Bennett, *Library Service in Saskatchewan* (Saskatoon, 1937); and *The Public Library in Canada in Relation to the Government* by Jean E. Stewart (Chicago, 1939) benefited greatly from the inspiration of *LIC*.

More than a decade on, another national study by the Canadian Library Council, *Libraries in the Life of the Canadian Nation*, published at Ottawa in 1946, revisited numerous ideas from the Commission of Enquiry. Many of the subsequent studies began to utilize data gathered on a biennial basis by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, a resource that *LIC* neglected. But, by this time, the influence of the initial efforts by Ridington, Black and Locke had taken hold. It was the power of words and ideas rather than explication of numbers and facts that prevailed.

A digital version of *Libraries in Canada* is available at the [Internet Archive](#). There is no subscription cost to set up an account.

Review by Edgar S. Robinson and Harold L. Leupp, *Bulletin of the American Library Association* 27, 4 (April 1933), 197–198

Review by Clarence B. Lester, *Library Quarterly* 4, 4 (Oct. 1934), 662–66

Basil Stuart-Stubbs, "1930: the Commissioners' Trail," *Feliciter* 47, 3 (2001), 140–41

Basil Stuart-Stubbs, "1933: The Commission Speaks," *Feliciter* 48, 3 (2002), 126–28

Basil Stuart-Stubbs, "1934: CLA Redux . . . Almost," *Feliciter* 49, 3 (2003), 161–64

My blog on Nora Bateson's two Maritime surveys is [at this link](#).

My blog on the Canadian Library Council study in 1946, *Libraries in the Life of the Canadian Nation*, is [at this link](#).

My blog on Jean Stewart's report, *The Public Library in Canada in Relation to the Government*, is [at this link](#).

*This blog was updated with new information and links on
November 5, 2025*

Friday, October 18, 2013

National Library Act, 1952 – From Drawing Board to Reality

Sixty years ago, in January 1953, Canada's ***National Library Act***, took effect. The original statute was passed on May 27, 1952 during the 6th session of 21st Canadian Parliament under the Liberal leader, Prime Minister Louis St-Laurent. The year 1952 was not uneventful. The country was emerging from the immediate postwar era in a more prosperous condition; Elizabeth II became Queen of Canada; Canadian armed forces were fighting in Korea; CBC television went on the air; and a national Old Age Security scheme was introduced. For most Canadians, the National Library was a lesser consideration in nation building.

However, the idea of assembling the greatest collection of literature on Canada in the world and making it available to all Canadians had been an important recommendation of the influential Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (aka the Massey Report) when it was released in 1951. The report was clear about its national importance:

"That a National Library finds no place among the federal institutions which we have been required to examine is a remarkable fact which has been occasion of much sharp comment during our sessions. Over ninety organizations have discussed this matter, some in great detail, urging that what has been called a 'national disgrace' be remedied."

And the government agreed. It introduced a bill within a year to establish such an institution. When Dr. Kaye Lamb (below at left) became National Librarian as well as Dominion Archivist, expectations were high. Many librarians and researchers felt an



immediate need for a large collection, a union catalogue of holdings of major Canadian libraries, and a national bibliography to replace the effort Toronto Public Library had begun in the 1920s. They wanted coordination among libraries and leadership on matters that required a Canadian voice or liaison with other external agencies like the Library of Congress or UNESCO.

What did the new legislation mandate or allow? The 1952 statute was a succinct four-page document with thirteen sections.

Some formalities were dealt within the first seven sections -- a few definitions (e.g. "book"), appointment of a National Librarian and an Assistant National Librarian (Dr. Raymond Tanghe was selected), establishment of a National Library consisting of "all books placed in the care and custody of the National Librarian," and provision for staff in accordance with the Civil Service Act. An Advisory Council was also mandated (sec. 8) to be composed of three *ex officio* members -- the National Librarian along with the General and Parliamentary Librarians from the Parliamentary Library that had lost many books in a fire in 1952 -- and twelve people representing all Canadian provinces. In mid-twentieth century Canada, important federal institutions featured advisory groups that provided advice and could question policy. Dr. Lamb had already formed a similar advisory committee in 1948 to look into the formation of a national library.

Section 10 was really the heart of the matter. The powers and duties of the National Librarian were as follows: a) the collection of books; b) compilation of a national union catalogue of library holdings which could be utilized for interlibrary lending; c)

publication of a national bibliography of works on Canada and by Canadians to make known the country's identity and activities; d) lending, selling, disposing, and exchanging books with institutions in Canada and elsewhere; e) making the Library available to the government and Canadians "to the greatest possible extent" consistent with sound administration.

Section 11 established a deposit scheme whereby Canadian publishers were obliged to send copies of books to the Library. It allowed the cabinet Minister having oversight of the National Library to regulate the deposit scheme. Previously, publishers had sent copies to the Parliamentary Library under the *Copyright Amendment Act, 1931*. Sections 12-13 established an account for Parliamentary grants for books, a special account for donations and bequests, and required the National Librarian to file a report each year.

In the subsequent decade, Dr. Lamb worked assiduously to develop library services in conjunction with its partner, the Public Archives of Canada. At first, Library services, the Bibliographical Centre, then the new divisions of cataloguing, reference, and ordering operated in the Public Archives building on Sussex Drive. By 1955, plans were underway to build a new four-storey building on Wellington Street for two million books. This facility would also include resources and staff from the Public Archives. Both institutions were 'bulging at the seams.'

Dr. Lamb believed the national archives and library should operate complementary activities such as information services, a historical reference collection of books, maps, newspapers, and acquisitions, within a single building. It was a matter of logistics to locate the activities of the two professions in one building for better public access and for economical operation. In 1956, the homeless library moved to a new records storage warehouse at Tunney's Pasture.

Things moved slowly, very slowly. On Dominion Day 1959, a

Toronto *Globe and Mail* editorial strongly suggested "the Government should now consider giving special priority to the National Library project. The library is needed in the life of this country, and there can be no library in any real sense until there is a building with shelves to put books on, where people can get at them." The government eventually designated the building as a national Centennial project and authorized a budget for its construction. Just in time for Dominion Day, on June 20th 1967, Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson opened the new Public Archives and National Library Building.

The Massey Report recommendations and Dr. Lamb's vision of national library service had taken shape over fifteen long years. During this time Canadian society and libraries were changing dramatically. Bi-culturalism was flourishing: two months after opening the Wellington St. building, the Quebec National Assembly enacted provisions for a 'national' library in Montreal to collect materials about Quebec, books published in Quebec and by Quebec authors. The Bibliothèque nationale du Québec was mandated to produce its own bibliographic record. As well, scientific research across Canada was escalating rapidly and the National Library had already relinquished its role in these extensive areas. A few miles along the Ottawa River, the National Research Council library formally became Canada's "National Science Library" shortly before the 1967 celebrations.

Government decisions, telecommunications, computers, and new media were altering the operation and scope of libraries in Ottawa and throughout the country. The task at hand would be the development of new ideas, resources, and roles for the National Library.

The [National Library Act, 1952](#) is available at the Internet Archive of books (Revised Statutes of Canada 1952, chap. 330)

The Massey Commission briefs and report are available at <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/2/5/h5-400-e.html>

My blog on the development of the National Library after it moved into its new building is [at this link](#).

Tuesday, August 27, 2013

***The Library Book: A History of Service to British Columbia* by David Obee (2011)**

The Library Book: A History of Service to British Columbia by David Obee. Vancouver, British Columbia Library Association, 2011. 264 p., illus., \$50.00.

A modestly sized coffee table book with 300 photographs is an unusual entry for a library history but, in this case, well worth reading and possessing. ***The Library Book*** covers more than a hundred years in three major sections with eighteen chapters. David Obee is a respected journalist, a local-family historian, as well as a genealogist; and he has combined his knowledge and skills to craft an informative and entertaining history of all types of libraries in British Columbia from the late eighteenth century up to the present. With the help of a number of prominent BC people in the library community, this book was published to celebrate the centenary of the British Columbia Library Association in 2011.

David Obee covers the development of a valued provincial service to many different clienteles by public, school, college and university, special, government and legislative libraries. While 'service' is a keynote theme, Obee also includes details and chapters on intellectual freedom, information technology, library associations, and library organization. The text is divided into three main periods with fairly even treatment: 1796 to 1926; 1927-1959; and 1960 to today. Often, of course, books that celebrate contemporary milestones concentrate on the latest period, but that is not the case in ***The Library Book***.

In the first part, we learn that James Strange brought books to BC on a fur-trade mission in 1796; that New Westminster established the first 'public' library in 1865; that the Legislative Library was formed in 1863 to serve the small British colony on Vancouver Island; that three Carnegie libraries had opened by

1905 (Victoria, Vancouver, and New Westminster); that a training course in librarianship appeared in 1913; and that the University of British Columbia library opened in 1915. Progress was never easy, of course. Few municipalities took advantage of the Free Libraries Act of 1891; however, when this act was thoroughly revised in 1919 it also established a Public Library Commission and granted financial aid to 'library associations' which became eligible to receive travelling libraries (small boxes of books) from the Commission's headquarters. This was an important landmark to provide all provincial residents with some form of library service.

The second section begins with the Commission's efforts to promote the development of regional libraries (a Canadian innovation) under the stewardship of the dynamic Helen Gordon Stewart. In 1930 she began a successful Carnegie funded regional demonstration in the Fraser Valley which led to the creation of two other library systems, the Okanagan and Vancouver Island. The Great Depression and WWII stymied other progress but regional systems and bookmobiles were a major step in reaching rural Canadians. The postwar era saw new buildings, larger collections, better-trained librarians, and the spread of business, government, and school libraries. But perhaps the most interesting chapter in this part touches on a personal confrontation between a librarian, John Marshall, and the Victoria library. During the height of the Cold War and anti-Communist rhetoric, in 1954, Marshall was summarily terminated for his ties with 'Red' organizations. At the same time, pro-Communist books came under fire. Half a century later, in 1998, the Victoria Library publicly apologized to Marshall. By this time, libraries had become advocates of intellectual freedom not guardians of political and moral standards.

The final section begins in 1960; this is not a seminal date, but perhaps the 1960s decade was for Canadian libraries of all types. There was a boom in new library buildings across Canada and British Columbia was no exception. New universities and colleges—Simon Fraser (1965), Victoria (1963), Capilano

(1968), and Okanagan (1963)—rapidly developed with a need for new library operations based around computer technology. Outside cities, the days of the one-room rural schoolhouse had come to end as more centralized schools with better libraries and staffing became the norm. In 1961, a School of Librarianship was established at the University of British Columbia to provide more librarians with a standard degree for professional training, the BLS. Obee concludes his history with chapters on the "tsunami" of technological change that has swept libraries since the 1970s, the explosive growth of the internet, and the emergence of the "library without walls." This period is necessarily compressed, but Obee gives the reader the basics without delving deeply into library jargon and administtrivia.

One feature of *The Library Book* that deserves special comment is the design and format of the volume. Excellent black and white/colour photographs are sprinkled throughout. Boxed texts with quotes and outlines of important events or people who have made valuable contributions are helpful additions that complement the chronological format. Deserving individuals who receive particular attention are E.O.S. Scholefield, John Ridington, W. Kaye Lamb, Lois Bewley, Basil Stuart-Stubbs, Margaret Clay, and Helen Gordon Stewart. They made contributions on a national level, as well as in British Columbia. At about 12" x 12," the book is still easily readable and displays nicely. There is an excellent timeline and appendices detailing various topics on associations, award winners, etc. The index provides convenient access to persons, subjects, and institutions. Researchers and historians will have to be satisfied with the narrative and pursue their interests elsewhere because there are no footnotes or a bibliography!!! But most general readers can do without the academic apparatus.

David Obee and the BC Library Association must be congratulated for bringing *The Library Book* to press. It stands as the most complete Canadian provincial history of libraries produced to date and an important addition to the history of libraries in Canada.

I have blog posts on the development of public libraries in British Columbia:

Three British Columbia Public Library Commission reports, 1927–1941 [at this link](#).

Four Library Development Reports in British Columbia, 1945 to 1956 [at this link](#).

A biography of Helen Gordon Stewart [at this link](#).

The American Library Association's Canadian conference in Vancouver, 1949 [at this link](#).

Monday, August 19, 2013

A Book in Every Hand by Don Kerr (2005)

A Book in Every Hand: Public Libraries in Saskatchewan by Don Kerr. Regina: Coteau Books, 2005. 279 pp.; \$19.95. Still available via email from [Saskatchewan Library Trustees' Association](mailto:info@sasklib.org).

At the start of the 1930s, a national study funded by the Carnegie Corporation, *Libraries in Canada*, reasoned that Saskatchewan, which had almost a million people, might prosper in the years ahead if public library proponents worked hard to achieve services outside a few major communities. A base existed. Regina and North Battleford had Carnegie library buildings. Saskatoon, Prince Albert, and Moose Jaw were major centres with book collections. But the vast majority of people were rural dwellers who depended on a Travelling Library service of boxes of books for loan, an Open Shelf system of 'books by mail' operated from the provincial Legislature, and small struggling mostly subscription funded libraries. One solution highlighted by this report seemed to be the development of regional libraries through cooperative efforts--of course, 'cooperation' was a buzz word during the Great Depression. It became a byword for library progress in the latter part of the 20th century.

Don Kerr's welcome volume on public library development in a large province with a small population outlines the successful efforts of library supporters, politicians, governments, trustees and librarians over seventy years up to 2005. Canadian provinces have distinct public library systems and Kerr (a former Saskatoon library trustee) best describes Saskatchewan's development as a 'one-library system' with administration centralized and public services decentralized. The Provincial Library, formed in 1953, is a central coordinating body. Regina and Saskatoon serve as resource centres. Eight unified regional

systems gradually formed after 1950 are important hubs. Three in the south: Chinook (1971), Palliser (1973), and Southeast (1966). Four in the centre: Wapiti (1950), Wheatland (1967), Parkland (1968), and Lakeland (1972). Lastly, in the north an autonomous board for the Pahkisimon Nuye?áh Library, a federated structure of communities and school libraries, formed in 1991. Initially, the province provided the majority of funding for regions. Today, the regions are funded principally by local levies supplemented by provincial aid. Kerr concludes that Saskatchewan has one of the best library systems in Canada.

This study is organized in a chronologic-geographic mode with theme chapters from the very early days when Saskatchewan was a territory to early 21st century arrangements based on a union catalogue, reciprocal borrowing, and interlibrary loan. As mechanics' institutes changed to community libraries, as travelling libraries and the open shelf service disappeared in the 1960s, a provincial-regional partnership emerged. A Regional Libraries Act (1946) and formation of a Provincial Library (1953) set the stage for growth in the 1960s. As the system expanded, periodic reviews took place to update legislation in 1984, in 1996, and to create a multitype library authority to coordinate work and access by all types of libraries to collections and information. For Canadian library history readers there are familiar names scattered through Kerr's history: J.R.C. Honeyman, Marion Gilroy, Mary Donaldson, Don Meadows, and Frances Morrison. In many ways, the success of equitable service throughout the province is underlined by the personal commitments by strong-minded individuals. Although individual effort and local initiative was essential in building Saskatchewan's libraries, Kerr credits the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation governments with much of the initial impetus towards equitable service in rural areas. The CCF under Tommy Douglas was sympathetic and ready to assist library planners.

A Book in Every Hand details the arduous efforts to form and create regional systems one by one over three decades. 'Planning from below' was never easy—mandatory participation by municipalities in regions did not come into being until 1996. Often, local autonomy trumped universal access, a familiar library theme. The development of urban services in Saskatoon and Regina provides insights into library planning and community building through branches and online access via the internet. Also, budget struggles with city elders! There are interesting separate chapters devoted to the Saskatchewan Library Association's (SLA) contributions; the development of a provincial multitype system in the 1990s; and aboriginal library service that began to function in the 1960s. The SLA was an early supporter of the creation of a National Library in Ottawa in the 1940s and, along with the Canadian Library Association, a constant source of professional development for the province's librarians. When the federal government began assistance in earnest for Indian band libraries in the mid-1960s, there were plans to train persons, to build suitable collections, to finance and assist aboriginal communities. These efforts usually (but not always) met with success. The short chapter on multitype service offers some information that is comparable to efforts in neighboring Alberta.

Don Kerr is an excellent writer-poet-scholar, with many books to his credit. His text sweeps the reader along with personable comments from his own interviews and from documentary sources he consulted. He offers a personal account at the outset about his love of libraries and a general outline of his history. Book chapters are interspersed with tables, black and white illustrations, and some beautiful colour plates of public libraries provided by the Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation. More on library architecture would have been a definite plus for *A Book in Every Hand*. There are frequent scholarly footnotes that will lead researchers to additional information and sources of study. A great index too! Kerr's work impressively documents the development of equitable access and better services hinted at by

Libraries Canada in the depression years. There are not many histories of public library development for an entire Canadian province but this is one that makes me wish there was a digital version.

Thursday, August 01, 2013

Library Spirit in the Nordic and Baltic Countries (2009)

Library Spirit in the Nordic and Baltic Countries: Historical Perspectives edited by Martin Dyrbye, Ilkka Makinen, Tiiu Reimo, and Magnus Torstensson. Tampere, Finland: HIBOLIRE, 2009. 188 p. illus.

The authors involved in this publication belong to HIBOLIRE, The Nordic-Baltic-Russian Network on the History of Books, Libraries and Reading, a multinational and multidisciplinary network of scholars. They consider the development of Nordic public libraries to be relatively influential and successful in a broad northern geographic arc from Greenland to the Baltic States. My interest in this library history is on the comparative aspects that I recognize from a Canadian context, not surprising because the Nordic "library spirit" often incorporates Anglo-American ideas about public libraries stemming from the 19th century that were also prevalent in Canada. I had the good fortune to meet Magnus Torstensson in fall 1997 when he visited me here in Guelph after taking in Niagara Falls earlier!



In terms of public library development, several countries evolved services from a variety of pre-1900 'public' institutions: reading societies, school and university libraries open to the public, commercial and scientific groups, parish libraries, and *folkbiblioteken* (Sweden) to assist lower classes with less access to reading materials. In many ways, this parallels the Canadian experience with a host of "social libraries" -- library associations, mechanics' institutes, athenaeums, literary societies, mercantile libraries, etc. -- that existed in Canada prior to 1900. The transformation of these libraries into free public libraries, i.e. libraries regulated by government legislation, managed as a public trust, financed by municipal tax levies and open to local residents, is recounted a number of times, especially for Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, where Anglo-American concepts took hold at an earlier stage. Of course, state aid was crucial in the development of the public library concept. It is interesting that financial assistance begins in Norway in the 1830s in the same time period as Canadian colonial government grants to mechanics' institutes commence. By the last quarter of the 19th century, popular or people's libraries in the Nordic-Baltic countries were prominent in many communities.

Canadian provinces began experimenting with general legislation for local libraries and government support as early as 1851. Of course, proximity to the American border states and colonial association with Britain sparked many ideas about libraries, especially after Confederation in 1867 colonial status after 1867, when Canada began to emerge as a fully sovereign nation. Public library legislation for the Nordic-Baltic experience evolved at a slower pace, but many Anglo-American ideas circulated and help promote library progress. Especially, important was the "library spirit" -- the idea of the library as an active educational force that facilitates access to collections and promotes community development through a variety of ever-changing services. Fused with two major concepts, *Bildung* and *Volksbildung*, the Nordic library spirit continues today, a combination of self-cultivation or improvement and popular or adult education in the broadest sense. I find these underlying philosophic ideas to be unique, and really without parallel in

Canada where early library promoters were mostly influenced by Utilitarian ideas disseminated from Britain.

The formation of national library associations and librarianship is another focus I found interesting. In Canada, association formation came at the provincial and local level prior to a national organization in 1946, promoted mostly by the need for a national library "voice" and coordinating body. Major Nordic countries had formed national bodies decades before this date, inspired by leading intellectuals and publications about libraries/librarianship. A Finnish association was formed as early as 1910, even before the country's independence from Russia during WW I. Associations not only attempted to improve library services, they sought to improve the social standing and working conditions of librarians. There are insightful chapters on the development of the library profession -- from volunteer status, to vocation, to profession -- in Denmark. The concept of public service for professional librarians was expanded to align with societal needs. As in Canada, this change mostly took place after 1945 as national systems of libraries developed rapidly and educated personnel were required. The development of Library Science as part of the Nordic educational curriculum and training for librarianship also was a crucial development during this period.

It would be too much to try and summarize all seventeen chapters that record the history of libraries within national cultural and educational progress in the Nordic-Baltic spectrum. Some presentations, such as the Soviet era in the three Baltic Republics, represent discontinuity in library development and a complete rejection of Anglo-American influences. The Scandinavian style of library architecture was obviously influenced by the International Style at an earlier stage than Canada, thus functional forms, open interior design, and horizontal elements as evidenced by the Nyborg Public Library had arrived by 1939. Comparative analysis, like the final chapter which summarizes the work of preceding authors, is important, yet in many ways each chapter has a distinct history based on differing perspectives about libraries.

Comparative histories usually follow the path of identifying a variable, such as "library spirit," examining various cases to determine similarities (and differences), and then offering an explanation for why (or how, who, or when) the variable succeeded, developed, changed, or varied by case or geography, etc. An important journal in this field is *Comparative Studies in Society and History* from Cambridge University. A historiographical study by Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (translated from French in 1954), still is a reliable and useful guide to comparative history. Bloch was a pioneer in comparative studies, specializing in medieval feudal societies.

Hopefully, the HIBOLIRE network can continue to produce informative histories that broaden our knowledge about libraries, books, and reading. The comparative approach offers the possibility of identifying recurring social mechanisms and structures as well as observing how different outcomes are possible.

Thursday, July 25, 2013

***The Most Attractive Resort in Town* by Barbara Myrvold (2009)**

The Most Attractive Resort in Town: Public Library Service in West Toronto Junction, 1888-2009 by Barbara Myrvold.

Toronto: Toronto Public Library Board, 2009. 2nd revised and expanded edition, paper, 82 p., 126 illus. Available for download at <http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/local-history-publications/most-attractive-resort.jsp> .

Originally published in 1989 with co-author Barbara Forsyth to record the 80th anniversary of the Annette Street branch (1909-1989) of Toronto Public Library, this updated 2009 version is a welcome addition to histories of community library service in Canada. The book title derives from a quote by the Women's Christian Temperance Union when the West Toronto Junction Mechanics Institute was formed in 1888. The WCTU obviously hoped the influence of book reading and social amusements provided would divert young men from less uplifting pursuits in this growing community of 3,000 people. Self-improvement is an important theme in library history and there are frequent references to this trait throughout this book.

The expanded version includes much more detail, more images, and an updated chapter on post-1989 activities--almost fifty additional pages more than the 1988 edition. The period before West Toronto's annexation in 1909 by the city of Toronto is covered in rich detail. The nuances of bylaws, biographies of board members and civic politicians, buildings, Toronto Junction's growth, streetscapes, and local businesses provides are included within the context of wider socio-economic developments. Annual plans to balance budgets based mostly on membership fees and other contributions give us a picture of how the library was managed and staffed. Like many other

Ontario communities, Toronto Junction's service had its roots as a Mechanics' Institute until 1895 provincial legislation transformed MIs into public libraries with various types of management and financing provisions. As the Junction grew rapidly at the turn of 1900 library supporters decided to partake of the Carnegie program of grants for a suitable building.

An entire chapter is devoted to plans and activities revolving around how a Carnegie grant of \$20,000--a handsome sum for a Canadian town--was obtained and expended. Along the way, Toronto Junction passed a bylaw to establish a "free" public library, i.e. one eligible for an annual statutory tax levy of about \$2,000 (a Carnegie requirement); the town disappeared as a separate municipal entity after annexation by the city of Toronto; and considerable time was spent procuring a site and architectural renderings and construction of a new library. By the time the building (designed in the popular classic Beaux-Arts style with interior layout for closed book stacks and no separate children's area) opened, it had become Toronto Public Library's "Western Branch," a neighbourhood resource in a large city rather than a standalone civic agency. This was not the "end of history" but rather a new beginning, one unforeseen when the pursuit of Carnegie money commenced.

Barbara Myrvold guides us through the Junction library's next century as the Western branch (renamed Annette Street in 1962) developed its new identity within a larger city system. For this period, there is less detail; in part because many of the source materials used to build the first part of the library's history no longer existed--there are no separate board or council minutes for the Junction; less space is devoted to activities in Toronto's daily newspapers; and no personal accounts by local residents who served in various capacities in a local municipal environment. As the sources for history change, so does the history for institutional histories such as this one! There are still "facts" and "events," the stuff of history, for the author to illustrate on a larger canvas using different sources at hand. If

there is little written about censorship it is because this theme is broader and does not appear to have significantly affected the Junction's reading public.

After 1909, the library's history is portrayed through various strands of administrative activity, functional library services, and general societal trends. As the ethos of Victorianism declined in the first part of the 20th century, the library's "mission" changed from didactic moral uplift and self-improvement to providing activities, programs, resources, and information guided by community surveys and analysis of users and non-users. After the Ontario government eliminated age restrictions in 1909, children's services became a primary focus of work in libraries and Toronto under the aegis of Lillian Smith, who developed a model of services that was one of the best in North America and the British Commonwealth. In the 1920s, TPL's efforts to bring "the right book to the right reader" extended branch work to recreational adult education programs. As the demographic makeup of the Junction changed from its British origins to a more diverse mosaic, multilingual collections (originally termed foreign language) expanded in the late 1950s in many TPL branches.

In the 1970s, as "Toronto the Good" became more cosmopolitan, TPL embarked on an extensive renovation program for many branches, turning them into neighbourhood "people places," and Annette profited from a complete remodeling and addition to the original building in 1979-80. In the 1980s, a local history collection was established in conjunction with the local historical society. In the 1990s, a computerized circulation system, catalogue stations, and access to the Internet were important improvements as libraries moved from book places to information providers. As the challenges of the digital library era brought into question the idea of the need for physical resources, Annette Street celebrated its centennial in 2009 after the branch--open about 50 hours per week--had busily circulated 168,132 items in the previous year.

Added to an informative text are more than a hundred black and white pictures that highlight people, buildings, events, design plans, collections, equipment and furnishings. Special attention is paid to architectural details present in the Carnegie building and the subsequent modest updates in 1962 and complete renovation in 1979-80. The author shows that the Annette branch was a successful instrument for serving and promoting its surrounding community of about 10,000 people. *The Most Attractive Resort* is peppered with hundreds of footnotes that makes it useful for other library history researchers. Overall, this is one of the best micro library histories produced in Canada to date and it can be used to document broader studies.

Further: a link to the [plaque commemorating the branch by Heritage Toronto](#) is available (now Annette Street branch).

Thursday, July 18, 2013

***The Quebec Library Association* by Peter F. McNally and Rosemary Cochrane (2009)**

Quebec Library Association: An Historical Overview, 1932–2007 = L'Association des bibliothécaires de Québec: un survol historique, 1932-2007 by Peter F. McNally and Rosemary Cochrane. Montreal: Association des bibliothécaires de Québec. 2009. Cdn \$20.00 (Canada); \$25.00 (US); \$30.00 (rest of world, including postage). ISBN: 09697803.

Anniversaries are often the occasion for retrospective histories. For the 75th birthday of ABQLA a project was struck to document ABQLA's activities since 1932 under the authorship of Peter McNally and Rosemary Cochrane. In a brief 30 pages, they have distilled the highlights of this regional library association's life. Anyone interested in ABQLA's past will find this a useful starting point for facts, sources, and historical periodization.

Born in the years of the Great Depression after efforts to establish a Canadian organization for libraries and librarians faltered, ABQLA realized positive results from the depression-era bywords "co-operative efforts" where others failed. ABQLA had the advantage of a membership base in Canada's largest urban centre, the city of Montreal. From the outset, the association functioned on a bilingual basis and participated in Canada's first major regional (perhaps even national) library meetings at Ottawa and Montreal in 1937 and 1939 before WW II ended these interprovincial opportunities.

As a provincial organization largely based in Montreal, ABQLA often has found it difficult to address many issues of library development in Quebec. Library service to the public, universities and colleges, schools, and special libraries all had their own diverse qualities and governance issues that made coordination difficult. On a national scale, ABQLA members

helped with the creation of the Canadian Library Association in 1946 and throughout the fifties and sixties promoted the concept of a national library in Ottawa.

After the Quiet Revolution and the economic downturn of the early 1970s, ABQLA's regional prominence came under challenge from many new groups within Quebec. After its 50th anniversary, ABQLA experienced membership problems but continued to encourage library education and organized smaller, successful annual meetings. At Montreal, at the Canadian Library Association conference in 1991, ABQLA hosted a provincial coordinating group, the Provincial, Regional and Territorial Libraries Association. In the age of the Internet, of course, the association launched a website to better maintain contact with its members.

In the new millennium, ABQLA's membership base remains less than 200 persons. It might be said after reading McNally's and Cochrane's work that ABQLA's accomplishments far outweigh what one might expect from a small group. However, it could also be said that ABQLA has succeeded in maintaining libraries in the provincial spotlight because its executive and membership did not lack for enthusiasm, ingenuity, or united action in putting their concerns before the public and government departments that have increasingly supported library progress across the province in the past half-century.

While one might quibble about the brevity of this history, a library historian might rightfully pose the question: what other Canadian library association has an up-to-date account of its life? Enough said . . .

Some might consider this book a typical institutional library history that charts its way through the course of the twentieth century without much regard to social, political, or economic currents that shaped Canada and Quebec. Others might regret the lack of a cultural studies perspective -- where does ABQLA stand in the "modernity project" cultural theorists and historians speak about? or has ABQLA been able to transcend its origin

and make the passage to the "postmodern condition?" These are important questions, but lacking a basic framework that this overview provides they are best set aside until further research can be conducted. In fact, ABQLA's programs, membership patterns, and changing structures show us that "people can make history" and that the differentiated provincial landscapes of public library history--the multiple regional histories that make up the heart of the Canadian public library history--are essential to understanding how public library systems developed in Canada. Without regional contexts--the associations, librarians, library "systems," etc.--the broader national history of public libraries cannot be researched and written.

Originally posted in 2010

Thursday, July 18, 2013

Ottawa and Nepean Public Libraries in 20th Century by Phil Jenkins

The Library Book: An Overdue History of the Ottawa Public Library 1906-2001. By Phil Jenkins. Ottawa Public Library, 2002. 150 p. illus. paper. Also available as ***Une bibliothèque vivante: l'histoire tant attendue de la Bibliothèque publique d'Ottawa, 1906-2001.***

Popular history! What's that? Well, here it is for librarians and the history of libraries in Ontario. Phil Jenkins, the well-known Ottawa area writer and book lover, has authored award-winning works such as *Fields of Vision: A Journey to Canada's Family Farms* (1991) and *An Acre of Time* (1996). Now he has turned his attention to libraries.

Jenkins' ***Library Book*** was commissioned by the Ottawa Public Library in 2000 to highlight OPL's history prior to amalgamation arising from Ontario's municipal reforms in the 1990s. Not surprisingly, Jenkins has aimed at a general audience and provides his own insights along with engaging anecdotes and particulars.

Popular history takes many forms and directions. It is not simply a matter of recognizing differences between academic jargon vs. journalist style. There are many examples of valuable popular histories – Margaret MacMillan's *Paris 1919*, Pierre Berton's *Klondike*, and Peter C. Newman's *Company of Adventurers*. These are trustworthy, interesting histories that fill a void in the historical record. Some academics might argue that Jenkins' approach is too biographical and lacks both analysis and argument. But *Overdue History* strives to engage the public reader and even attract a new audience to library history through local-regional interest. In this context, Jenkins' work is valuable in its own right.

Popular histories have some appealing characteristics. They are normally narrative in structure and less analytical. Historical narratives often feature interesting characters, with entire sections devoted to one or more persons to demonstrate their influence. Of course, serious writers will integrate some analysis with various important issues. Interestingly, narrative history has made a resurgence since the 1980s, even in academic circles. Another common argument vs. popular history is that it is “too political” or “too traditional.” In the current historiographic library history debates in the UK and the USA “too institutional” might be another criticism. But at the micro-local level other approaches are not always suitable or viable. Further, community groups and formal organizations like public libraries are integral parts of social history, worthy of being “central characters” to build history around. Although popular histories may lack the sweep of broader social and economic aspects that influence the development of libraries and the professional makeup of librarians, they do offer up facts and events that can be used to illustrate broader trends. Finally, a more forceful argument is that many popular histories seldom offer new or useful contributions or interpretations to our understanding of history. This is not the case with Jenkins’ *Library Book* because the author returns to what he considers the central mission of libraries from time to time while describing changing services and operational modes.

Jenkins’ traces the evolution of Ottawa’s public library (and eventually its branch system) in nine chapters, six which are shaped around the chief librarians — Lawrence Burpee (1905-12); William Sykes (1912-36); Frederick Jennings (1936-53); Claude Aubry (1953-79), who received in Order of Canada in 1974; Gilles Frappier (1979-95); and Barbara Clubb (1995-present). The *Library Book* covers many highlights prior to 2001. Only a few can be mentioned here:

-- an effort by the Council of Women in 1895-96 to establish a free public library, a campaign that was defeated decisively for a variety of reasons;

- Andrew Carnegie's \$100,000 gift for a new library which opened in 1906 and served the city until its demolition in 1971;
- the opening of Rideau branch by former Prime Minister Robert Borden during the depression year of 1934 (a bilingual branch declared a heritage building in 1998);
- the implementation of the ever-popular bookmobile service in 1953 (which has survived many budget scenarios);
- the opening of Carlingwood, a small branch in a shopping centre in 1957, an innovation that would spread to other public library systems in cities across Canada;
- a barcoded circulation system, ULISYS, in 1980;
- establishment of Friends of the OPL in 1981 (the library's 75th anniversary);
- the creation of a writer-in-residence program in 1987;
- the 1996 launch of library services on the internet via web browsers;
- the amalgamation in 2001 of surrounding municipalities that expanded OPL from 8 branches to 36.

The ***Library Book*** is illustrated with revealing portraits of people and building projects, logos, and snippets from reports and newspapers (one on Adrienne Clarkson using children's books when she was 10). The cover cleverly displays an important chronology of OPL dates stamped on an old date due card that was library staple for many decades prior to the advent of computerized circulation systems. Jenkins offers a short account of a typical "day in the life" at the busy Main library starting at the early hour of 6:30 a.m. for the library's staff, readers, librarians, courier services, computer terminals, and all involved in operating a complex system. The author finishes with some futuristic thoughts. In the 21st century, computers and digital works may replace books as the most used items. Physical buildings may decline in number and size. But the library's rationale for providing reading materials, knowledge, and personalized public service will continue. Jenkins thinks there is more work to be done! I think he's right. OPL's story is not over – in fact, I will also review his other library history on Nepean, completed in 2005, in the near future.

Shelf Life: the short, full story of the Nepean Public Library.

By Phil Jenkins. Ottawa Public Library, 2005. 76 p. illus. paper.

Back in November, 2009, I promised a review of Phil Jenkins second book published by the OPL on Nepean Township's branches. Like ***The Library Book***, its predecessor, ***Shelf Life*** is a readable, well-illustrated, shorter account without footnotes or a lengthy bibliography -- just the kind of book many library readers in the Ottawa area might like for a gift! (I had to get a plug in for Christmas).

Jenkins' organization is straightforward starting with a quotation from Shakespeare's *Tempest* "my library was a dukedom large enough" (remember Prospero played by the late William Hutt at Stratford in 2005) then a drama in three acts/chapters: Beginning, Chronology, End with a few afterwords of remembrance by users and staff. This is history at work on a number of levels: memory, chronicle, and brief narratives.

Like Prospero, Nepean's citizens have taken home many learned books over the years, no doubt neglecting other activities but considering their time well spent nonetheless. Jenkins deals with Nepean township's early public library history which began with Egerton Ryerson's school-based system for children and adults in 1853. This small library, like other early township libraries in Ontario, did not survive and it would not be until the 1950s that Nepean's library rose again.

Postwar Ontario brought many changes, among them the growth of suburban townships around larger centres in Toronto, Hamilton, and Ottawa. New central libraries, branches, and bookmobiles emerged in rapidly growing townships such as North York and Etobicoke and Saltfleet. And Nepean was no exception: its systematic growth (Nepean was incorporated as a city in 1978) began again with the small police village, City View (now an Ottawa neighbourhood), voting for a library in 1955. Ruth E. Dickinson was instrumental in providing the

enthusiasm and effort behind the early growth of libraries in Nepean and Jenkins highlights her determination to succeed. She would be joined by many others, notably Betty Butterill who made important contributions to the Ontario Library Association's Trustees section in the 1970s. The long-standing mayor, Ben Franklin, was a supporter as well on the political stage from the late 1970s and today a branch bears his name.

In four decades, the Nepean library system grew from a small building at City View which counted on small donations to "add value" to its services in the 1950s to a large-scale operation that circulated more than a million books per year with a budget of five million dollars a year in the late 1990s. Its staff became unionized, it held more than 300,000 volumes for its 80,000+ registered users, and it offered a variety of programs to about 25,000 attendees each year.

But the sets, not just the actors and actresses, change on the municipal stage of life. In the provincially sponsored civic amalgamation reviews held across Ontario of the late 1990s, Nepean became part of the greater city of Ottawa effective 1 January 2001. Nepean's library transition team worked hard to include its four branches in the new Ottawa area system and to seek a new identity. A final board meeting held on 20 December 2000 honored 45 years of service to Nepean. Ruth E. Dickinson served as honorary chair for this meeting, a fitting way to say goodbye and celebrate the past.

Jenkins' book is a good read — like many of the books in Nepean's libraries over the years. ***Shelf Life's*** structure is different and its chronology reliable and well-worth recounting for library history purposes. I wish my copy was inscribed!

Originally posted in 2009

Tuesday, July 16, 2013

***Local Library, Global Passport* by J. Patrick Boyer (2008)**

Local Library, Global Passport: The Evolution of a Carnegie Library. By J. Patrick Boyer. Toronto: Blue Butterfly Book Publishing, 2008. 370 p, ill.; \$34.95 hardcover, \$22.95 paper,

2008 marks the 100th anniversary of the opening of the Bracebridge Carnegie library built with \$10,000 granted by the philanthropist, Andrew Carnegie. Patrick Boyer traces the evolution of local library service in Bracebridge (and to some extent in adjacent Muskoka towns) from 1874 to the present day with a local/global perspective as an overarching theme. The “library as community” and the library as “window on the world” provides a dual historical view to trace the library’s activity over 13 decades.

The author covers Bracebridge’s library history from the founding of the mechanics’ institute in 1874 to the virtual library of the 21st century in a series of chapters. In the pioneer days of Muskoka, books and newspapers were scarce ingredients in the promotion of intellectual life and the town’s political, business, and educational leaders—Victorian males who believed in progress and community development—established and promoted the town’s public library. By 1901, the municipal council had assumed control of the older institute and authorized a free public library supported by taxes. By 1908, the library board members and supportive citizens had erected a Carnegie library on Manitoba St., a distinctive building that would remain essentially unchanged for three generations. The “library as place” represented a cautious and stable, sometimes censorious, locale for residents to read about their changing country and world through war, depression, and postwar expansion. Some have recounted their library experience and how it helped them adapt and succeed.

Behind this interpretation, Dr. Boyer reveals that the library possessed an internal “dynamic stability” that helped it survive, then thrive in the second half of the 20th century. Its staff was prepared to apply new technology and develop new resources; and its board members or local politicians ready to finance new endeavours. In Canada’s Centennial Year, the library was modestly renovated and in 1984/85 the Carnegie library was completely restored and expanded to keep pace with the town’s development. In the next two decades, the library’s catalog was computerized and by 2005 the Internet was no longer a novel experience. The virtual library, a portal to international knowledge, was set to dwarf the previous century’s reliance on book collections as a window. But, as Boyer states, the book remains alive and well-positioned to entertain and inform.

Local Library, Global Passport (now associated with Dundurn Press) recounts the work of many people who believed in the value of library service. Quotes and illustrations provide a tangible view of the library, its librarians, and trustees as well as local community leaders. Various chapters offer insight into the library’s community role as an important cultural resource linked to place and identity. While Bracebridge provides the focus, its citizens — adults and children, students, seniors, new Canadians, people in need of outreach or special services, even local prisoners — are groups that the library has sought to serve. Dr. Boyer, whose family has been closely related to the library for many years, has successfully recounted the library’s history and offers insights that can be applied to many small Ontario town libraries. Along the way, his book is a good read and a valuable addition to Ontario’s growing corpus of library histories even though the primary source for his history, the minutes of library meetings for several decades, have disappeared without a trace.

After a century of Dominion Days and Canada Days, the library continues as an essential community asset, reason enough to celebrate every year.

Originally posted in March 2009

Monday, July 15, 2013

***Paper Talk* by Brendan F.R. Edwards (2005)**

Paper Talk: a History of Libraries, Print Culture, and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada before 1960. By Brendan Frederick R. Edwards. Lanham, Maryland, and Toronto: Scarecrow Press, 2005. 221 p.; illus.; paper.

This book, based on the author's MA thesis at Trent University, is a wonderful read and a valuable addition to Canadian book and library history. Edwards recently also contributed to the ***History of the Book in Canada*** project published by University of Toronto Press —“To put the talk upon paper”: Aboriginal Communities” (vol. 2: pp. 481-88) and “Reading on the ‘Rez’” (vol. 3: pp. 501-05). Edwards' works are informative histories that break new ground and cover more than a century of varying kinds of library service and print culture among Aboriginals across Canada. There are five main chapters as follows.

The introduction deals with the overall conceptual framework for books, libraries and First Peoples' literacy issues. To provide overall continuity and examine historical texts Edwards employs articulation theory, developed by Stuart Hall for cultural studies purposes in the 1980s. In short, in the creation of collective identities, services and resources that libraries provide can be combined with various different elements under certain circumstances to provide a “unifying” meaning. In some cases, the connection of various elements may be temporary and groups or persons will reformulate the elements based on tradition, technology, cultural preferences or other aspects of social life. Throughout ***Paper Talk*** libraries and books are adapted or re-conceptualized by Aboriginals in various ways to suit their own spoken and written traditions within an assimilative or integrative framework developed by Western missionaries and governmental officials. As a result, the historical record is a complicated one whereby ideas, discourses, and practices are linked with western (mostly textual) and aboriginal (often oral)

formations that are not predetermined by a dominant linear-progressive ideology or part of homogenous “modernization” theory where different peoples and cultures adopt Western culture, economic standards, etc.

The second chapter deals with 19th century interactions, mostly missionary efforts to civilize and convert Aboriginals to Christianity. Sunday school libraries and religious tracts were important elements of this process, but books in industrial schools played a role in literacy as well. In Ontario, for example, Ryerson’s library system and provincial legislation for voluntary libraries, such as mechanics’ institutes, were not well suited or designed for First Peoples. However, missionaries, like Thaddeus Osgood or James Evans played important roles in education by providing translations of texts, mostly (but not always) religious in content and the creation of a Cree syllabary. In terms of library history, Edwards provides a balanced view on the issue of libraries and social control noting that school collections were woefully inadequate or that public library provision for Aboriginals in communities was mostly non-existent prior to 1900.

From 1900-1930, the federal government began to play a more active role in education. Natives, such as Charles A Cooke, made requests for books and libraries based on their own understanding of libraries and literacy. In fact, Cooke promoted the formation of an Indian National Library before Lawrence Burpee launched his well-documented campaign for a National Library in Ottawa. Unfortunately, neither venture proceeded at this time, mostly due to federal inaction or inattention. Efforts were made to provide library books in day, residential, and industrial schools, a course often held to be sufficient for Aboriginals. There were only a few community libraries envisioned or established across Canada, notably the Lady Wood Library at Lennox Island, PEI.

A fourth chapter covering the period 1930-1960 charts changing standards and ideas that led to the recognition that community libraries were necessary, albeit impoverished in practice.

Travelling library services in Ontario and British Columbia (starting in the 1940s) and the figure of Angus Mowat, the director of provincial library service in Ontario, are introduced. Mowat's persistent efforts led to the establishment of an important community library at Moose Factory. But only small steps were taken in this period: in Ontario, Mowat's efforts furnished the basis for further action after 1960, a time of growth that lies outside Edward's book.

Edwards' final chapter reviews the complex efforts of First Nations peoples to utilize reading and writing and to establish libraries. Missionary work, philanthropy, self-help, federal departmental action/inaction in Indian Affairs, and individual efforts by persons such as Cooke and Mowat laid the basis for advancement after 1960. Before this time, there was a prolonged interplay of ideas about the incorporation of print culture developed by Aboriginals; conversion and education activities by missionaries; modes of assimilation and integration envisioned by federal officials; and what might be fairly labeled a "regime of neglect" by most people in the library field. Edwards concludes by noting that the adoption of books and libraries was not simply the result of Western assimilation but rather the adoption of these elements by First Nations to maintain and promote their own interests and preserve culture.

The articulation of identities demonstrates the ever-changing nature of social life and culture and the unique features of some historical periods that are often conceived as "Victorian" or "modern." *Paper Talk* offers much new evidence and synthesizes existing accounts in an effective presentation about Aboriginal library history that has been, to date, sadly neglected. Knowing that libraries and books can be involved in various shifting formations under certain conditions is a lasting value that Edwards stakes out throughout his book. In this type of history, contemporaries could gain from an examination of past precedents that were developed in the pre-1960 era.

Originally posted in October 2007

Monday, July 15, 2013

***The Morton Years* by Elizabeth Hulse (1995)**

The Morton Years: The Canadian Library Association, 1946–1971. By Elizabeth Hulse. Toronto: Ex Libris Association, 1995.

The genesis for this book dates to 1987 when the Ex Libris Association set out to honour the memory of Elizabeth Homer Morton (1903015077), the long-time executive director of the Canadian Library Association (CLA) and an important leader in Canada's twentieth-century library history. *The Morton Years* covers CLA's first quarter century and highlights Morton's contributions during her tenure of office (1944–68).

Elizabeth Hulse, a bibliographer and historical writer, has aimed for a broad readership: persons interested in librarianship, libraries, and the conditions that promoted progress in these areas during the postwar era's rapid growth of educational services. *The Morton Years* is a concise, authoritative history which will be recognized as a standard reference for many years. Hulse has delved into the CLA manuscript sources at the National Archives and has recorded a number of oral histories with former CLA officers. Researchers will be rewarded by studying the footnotes despite the fact that CLA's archives are not complete and that the administrative nature of many documents (often recorded or edited by Morton) are often unrewarding in terms of personal details or controversy.

A short introduction (1-12) provides a useful synopsis about the foundation of CLA in 1946. This account will likely undergo revision after a forthcoming publication (not available to the author) by William Buxton and Charles Acland on the Charles McCombs Report of 1941 appears. This new work will document the extent of American influence and financing for the educational goals that Canadian librarians actively pursued during the second world war and its immediate aftermath

The progress of many worthy CLA projects which Morton helped orchestrate between 1946-65 is traced in two chapters (13-52): the foundation of the National Library in Ottawa; the microfilming of historical newspapers; the development of the *Canadian Periodical Index*; successful publication ventures; the professionalization of librarianship; a CLA statement on intellectual freedom; and submissions to federal royal commissions to promote literacy, information services, women's rights, and bilingualism.

Hulse then addresses the problems faced by CLA in the mid-1960s and subsequent changes (53-90). Initially, CLA's organizational structure reflected the small base of its membership, but, by the mid-1960s, there were 2,500 members and the executive group which Morton guided was sometimes criticized as "out of touch." Under the terms of the first constitution only "library" members employed by libraries or library school graduates were eligible for election to the executive, which was assisted by a few councillors and section chairs (e.g., cataloging) in a formal legislative body. By 1971, the expanded membership had decided to reorganize along the lines of a "type-of-library" model with the presidents of five divisions (e.g., school libraries) serving on the executive along with elected representatives from regional library organizations. In this revised formation, a larger executive and council was deemed to be more responsive and representative. In addition, membership provisions were extended to all persons interested in the general welfare of library services.

In retrospect, it is clear that changes came about because CLA was not always effective in coping with professional issues or balancing diverse regional interests. This perspective is most evident in Hulse's description of the gradual withdrawal of Francophones into their own national organization in the mid-1960s (72-77). Effectively, by centennial year, CLA had become a unilingual national organization less attentive to professional concerns.

A final chapter (91-104) focuses on CLA's search for a successor and Morton's retirement. Hulse addresses a number of sensitive questions about CLA's chronic financial problems, and the pressures its executive confronted by attempting to replace someone who had worn many organizational hats. Most participants convey the impression that they felt Morton could not really be replaced (her successor left after three years). Morton's qualities as an executive officer, her management style, character, and leadership abilities are recounted at this point by Hulse, who concludes with a very brief summary of CLA's accomplishments.

Throughout *The Morton Years*, Hulse balances the demand to study the development of CLA and to personalize Morton's role as a catalyst and administrator. At certain critical points, such as the search for a successor, the sources are not complete enough to provide more satisfying explanations or historical narrative. By all accounts, Morton was a hard working, dedicated professional. Her career coincided with a labour market that offered a limited number of relatively low-paying professional career opportunities for women and with social conventions that dictated that they must resign their positions if they married. Morton did not directly challenge these barriers. Instead, she focused her energies on improving librarians' educational and occupational attainment through association activities on a national scale to redress gender workplace inequality, a typical response in the library community.

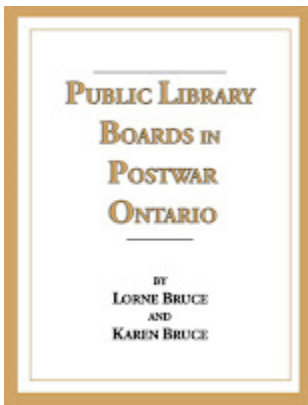
Overall, Hulse has woven a reliable account of CLA's postwar growth and demonstrated the outstanding contribution one person can make to a national organization. Elizabeth Morton deservedly received a Centennial Medal and became a member of the Order of Canada in 1968.

Originally posted in September 1997

Tuesday, August 07, 2012

Public Library Boards in Postwar Ontario, **(2012), by Lorne and Karen Bruce**

Karen and I have just reissued a revised edition of our older ***Public Library Boards in Postwar Ontario, 1945-1985***. It was originally published in 1988 as an occasional paper by the University of Dalhousie School of Library and Information Science. Long out of print. But now its back in print again with updated information for the original text and references plus a new chapter to continue the story from 1985 to just before 2010. Most of the original text has been retained.



Contemporary library boards in Ontario are mostly administrative entities, but this was not always the case. Local government today is very different from the pre-1945 era. Over the years, accountability has trumped representation (a political concept) in local government and provincial statutes controlling local agencies. The municipal government has overtaken many local bodies--clearly, elected local officials in larger government entities created after the 1960s in restructuring exercises now hold powerful positions in relation to other community agencies. But councils are by no means absolute. Local representative agencies, such as Ontario library boards, still possess interesting positions in local decision making and continue to exist through separate provincial legislation (for public libraries dating to 1882) and retain some influence over services.

The transformative period for Ontario library boards was no doubt framed by the remarkable growth and development of local government after 1945. By 1985, with the enactment of

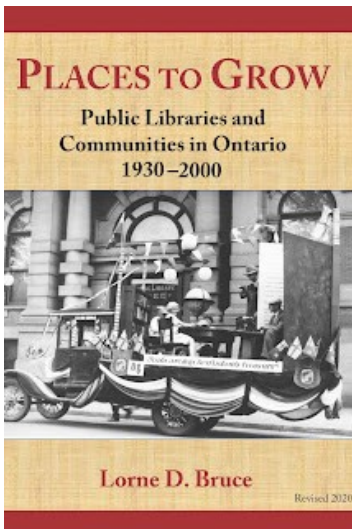
new library legislation, the issue of accountability for non-elective library boards was mostly resolved. Since that time, trustees and boards have accepted new roles and power relationships alongside municipal councils. But the original sense of community representation still remains a strong element in thinking about library operations and administration.

You can read this new edition at the [following link](#) at the Internet Archive and download it as well. The contents and paging for the new version of *Public Library Boards* is as follows:

1. Introduction
 2. Library Boards Prior to 1945
 3. Political Representation and Responsibility
 4. Influence, Power and Authority of Local Boards
 5. Intergovernmental Planning for Public Libraries
 6. Professionalism in Library Administration
 7. Trusteeship, the Internet, and the Digital Library
 8. Conclusion
- Tables

Thursday, July 19, 2012

***Places to Grow: Public Libraries and Communities in Ontario, 1930-2000* by Lorne Bruce (revised 2020)**



A follow up from my previous history of public library growth in Ontario, ***Free Books for All: The Public Library Movement in Ontario, 1850-1930***. I have recently updated ***Places*** in 2020 with additional materials-- references, tables, images, and a revised index. You can read the updated version of ***Places to Grow*** at the [following link](#) at the Internet Archive or a preview edition on [Google Books](#). Most of the revisions and additions relate to issues and

developments after 1985.

Places to Grow covers the history of the development of Ontario's public library system from the Great Depression to the Millennium. It describes the growth of larger systems of service, plans in the 1950s and 1960s for a provincial library system centred in Toronto, the professional growth of librarianship, library architecture, the decline of censorship and growth of intellectual freedom, the inexorable progress of library automation, the rise of electronic-virtual-digital libraries, the impact of the Information Highway in the nineties, and many other issues. Chapters include:

1. Introduction

2. Depression and Survival

- » Broader Perspectives: *Libraries in Canada*
- » The Public Libraries Branch and the OLA
- » Modern Methods
- » Local Libraries in the Great Slump
- » County Library Associations
- » School Curriculum Revision and the Public Library
- » The Libraries Recover

3. War and the Home Front

- » Military Libraries and American Allies
- » Wartime Services and Planning
- » The Spirit of Reconstruction
- » Peacetime Prospects

4. Postwar Renewal, 1945-55

- » The Library in the Community
- » Revised Regulations and Legislation
- » Postwar Progress and the Massey Commission
- » Intellectual Freedom and the Right to Read
- » The Hope Commission Report, 1950
- » New Media and Services
- » Setting Provincial Priorities

5. Provincial Library Planning, 1955-66

- » Library Leadership and Professionalism
- » Book Selection and Censorship
- » The Wallace Report, 1957
- » The Provincial Library Service and Shaw Report
- » The Sixties: Cultural and Societal Change
- » Towards the St. John Survey and Bill 155

6. “Many Voices, Many Solutions, Many Opinions,” 1967-75

- » The Centennial Spirit
- » Reorganizing Local Government
- » Schools and Libraries
- » Regional and Local Roles
- » Reaching New Publics and Partners

- » *The Learning Society* and Cultural Affairs
- » The Bowron Report

7. Review and Reorganization, 1975-85

- » “Canadian Libraries in Their Changing Environment”
- » “Entering the 80’s”
- » The Programme Review
- » *A Foundation for the Future*
- » The Public Libraries Act, 1984

8. The Road Ahead: *Libraries 2000*

- » New Directions and Consolidation
- » Legal Obligations
- » *One Place to Look: A Strategic Plan for the Nineties*
- » The Information Highway
 - » Savings and Restructuring, the Megacity, and Bill 109
- » The Millennium Arrives

Originally posted 26th October 2010 and updated on 15 April 2021. Ten blog posts that provide additional discussion:

The [Report on Provincial Library Service](#) by W.S. Wallace in 1957

The survey on Ontario libraries by [Francis R. St. John](#) in 1965

The [Bowron Report](#) published in 1975

The Ontario Public Library [Programme Review by Peter Bassnett](#) in 1982

The Ontario Library Association [One Place to Look](#) issued in 1990

The [Intellectual Freedom Statement](#) adopted by the Ontario Library Association in 1963

A brief synopsis on the development of the [modern public library from 1920–1965](#)

The [Centennial of Canada library building projects](#) in Ontario in 1966–67

The rise and fall of [regional library systems](#) in Ontario from 1966–1984

The development of the [Internet and Digital Library after 1990](#)

Wednesday, July 11, 2012

The Case for a National Library of Canada, 1933–1946

In the midst of the Great Depression a Carnegie funded project to study Canadian libraries appeared. In a hundred and fifty pages this report, authored by John Ridington, George H. Locke, and Mary J.L. Black, surveyed the landscape of library service across the country. Its two chapters on government libraries still make sober reading today. The surveyors reported there was “very little enthusiasm for either a scholarly or a democratic book service in most of the libraries of the various government of Canada.”

Indifference and neglect continued to prevail in government circles on the topic of a national library. *Libraries in Canada* (1933) did not issue a rallying cry for a national library—it was content with offering advice that a national librarian should be appointed and put in charge of all the libraries maintained by the Dominion government. In this way, all their activities could be coordinated, their holdings catalogued and made available nationally over a period of time. A system of legal deposit would ensure a comprehensive collection of printed resources. Eventually, a new building could be erected to house material and provide reference and reading services. It was an opportunity, but one unlikely to be a priority in the early 1930s.

But the times did change. The Great Depression of the 1930s demonstrated the inability of Canada's constitutional federal-provincial framework to alleviate economic conditions. A Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations was struck in 1937 to examine the underlying financing for the federal and provincial basis of Confederation and the distribution of legislative powers across Canada. Amongst the many

submissions were two on forming a National Library by the British Columbia and Ontario Library Associations in March and April 1938. The OLA brief recommended, “The details of the best type of organization for a Canadian National Library should be a matter of study by a Commission of library experts who could be supplied with full information by the libraries of the Dominion, and thus a national outlook would be obtained and the needs of all the provinces considered.”

These briefs envisioned four national functions. There would be a central repository of library information together with a national union catalogue of holdings. As well, the national library would issue books and liaise with cultural organizations, such as the National Museum, National Gallery, Public Archives, and Library of Parliament. The Commission sympathized with these points and stated a national library was within the federal mandate when it reported in 1940.



E.C. Kyte, 1929

From 1939 to 1945, the Canadian Library Council and prominent university librarians continued to press the case from Queen’s and Manitoba. The *Ontario Library Review* published E. Cockburn Kyte’s “A National Library for Canada,” in May 1939. He maintained the first priority should be the collection of printed materials. Elizabeth Dafoe argued for “A National Library” in the May 1944 issue of *Food for*

Thought. She emphasized the collection of books using a legal deposit law and the organizational ability to make collections readily available to ‘serious students.’ The General Librarian of Parliament, Felix Desrochers, added his support in the *Canadian Historical Review* in March 1944. He directed attention to overcrowding in the Parliamentary Library and the potential to

transfer less useful books that Members of Parliament and Senators were unlikely to use for their work.

But it was the Canadian Library Council, the predecessor to the Canadian Library Association, that best defined the activities that a National Library might undertake in its visionary *Canada Needs Libraries* in 1945:

- collecting national literature and history cooperatively with the Dominion Archives, National Gallery, and other national bodies;
- assembling a central national reference collection;
- lending items to other libraries;
- providing microfilm, photostat, and other copying services for clients;
- compiling a union catalogue to identify materials available through inter-library loan on a national scale;
- co-ordinating book information with audio-visual aids in co-operation with the National Film Board, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, etc;
- administering collections of Canadian books for exhibition abroad;
- publishing bibliographical works about Canada, e.g. *Canadian Catalogue of Books*, *99 Canadian Periodical Index*, etc.

Brief on a National Library for Canada, December 1946

After the formation of the Canadian Library Association in June 1946, these points were adopted and resubmitted in an influential brief to the federal government in December 1946. This particular effort, *A National Library for Canada*, elaborated on the benefits of a national library and the broad support the concept had garnered from other national groups: the Royal Society of Canada, the Canadian Historical Association, the Canadian Political Science Association, and the Social Science Research Council of Canada. This grouping of professional organizations was an influential catalyst in convincing federal

Members of Parliament in the value of a national library. There were many benefits to Canada (p. 11):

A National Library for Canada would contribute to the organization of precise knowledge, thus ensuring the most intelligent use of the country's resources, human and material.

The existence of a research centre on Canada would encourage the writing not only of factual works useful to the legislator, administrator, business man, farmer, student, but also of imaginative works based on research which would help to interpret Canada to Canadians and also to the world.

The prestige of the National Library and its many activities would stimulate the whole library movement. Individual libraries and citizens in all parts of the country would receive assistance from its publications and travelling exhibitions, its reference and cataloguing services, and from the speeding-up of inter-library loans through use of its union catalogues.

The international services of the National Library would play an essential role in Canada's expanding international relations.

To sum up, the National Library would be a centre of intellectual life of Canada, and a guarantee that the sources of its history will be preserved, and a symbol of our national concern with the things of the mind and the spirit.

To expedite matters, the 1946 brief of the Canadian Library Association concluded a national service could begin immediately and be housed in temporary quarters: "the National Library can begin as an Information Bureau and Bibliographical Centre, while at the same time, the investigation of the whole question of the ultimate organization of the National Library, its book stack and the building that will be needed to house its collections and its services is continued" (p. 3). The brief urged the government to form a committee reporting to a cabinet minister(s) to investigate its establishment. By June 1948 a Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament approved a plan for a

Bibliographic Centre as the first step towards the creation of a National Library.

In September 1948, Dr. W. Kaye Lamb was appointed Dominion Archivist, a position which he accepted on condition that he should pave the way for the establishment of a national library. Dr. Lamb had served as Provincial Archivist and Librarian of British Columbia from 1934-40 before becoming Librarian of the University of British Columbia. He had helped author British Columbia's brief to the Royal Commission in March 1938

In April 1949, the government established a Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences under the direction of the Vincent Massey. The Commission held public hearings across Canada—one brief was presented by the Canadian Library Association in late summer 1949. In *The National Library of Canada, Its Eventual Character and Scope*, the Association envisioned a longer-range view which emphasized the acquisition of collections and a suitable building to house holdings. Then, Dr. Lamb set to work by establishing the Canadian Bibliographic Centre in May 1950. Later, he helped draft the **National Library Act** passed by Parliament in 1952 and officially became Canada's first National Librarian on 1 January 1953.

Further Reading:

[*A National Library for Canada*](#); A Brief Presented to the Government of Canada by The Canadian Library Association/Association Canadienne des Bibliothèques, The Royal Society of Canada, The Canadian Historical Association, The Canadian Political Science Association, and The Social Science Research Council of Canada, December 1946 is available online at Library and Archives Canada as a submission to the Massey Commission.

My blog on the 1946 brief by CLA and several organizations is [at this link](#).

My blog on the 1949 brief by CLA to the Massey Commission is [at this link](#).

My blog on Canada Needs Libraries is [at this link](#).

Saturday, June 23, 2012

“A Plea for a National Library” — A Canadian Odyssey Begins in 1911



Lawrence J. Burpee, n.d.

Just over a century ago, in 1911, Lawrence Burpee published an article entitled “A Plea for a National Library” in Andrew MacPhail’s February issue of *University Magazine*, an influential literary magazine to which many leading Canadian academics, politicians, and authors contributed. Burpee came up with a great idea: he suggested that the Dominion government create a national library in Ottawa close to Parliament Hill. Just like other European and American countries!

Burpee obviously was dissatisfied that Canada lagged behind other nations. He asked: “Are we Canadians either so inferior, or so superior, to the rest of the world, that we cannot use, or do not need, such an institution?” Obviously, Burpee was a progressive thinker!

You can read his [entire article on the Internet Archive](#). Some parts of “A Plea” are inspirational, even in today’s jaded atmosphere about the benefits of government institutions. Only the more important points from Burpee’s piece are highlighted here. What did he propose? He wanted Parliament to enact legislation to create a national library, to erect a suitable building to house national collections, and for the library to serve as both a reference and circulating library. He felt the new entity should work with the National Archives, which had been established in 1872, and with the Library of Parliament: “What is really needed

is a Canadian national library, working in harmony with the two existing institutions, but filling its own field, a field which belongs neither to the national archives nor to the legislative library.”

Burpee was impressed with the workings of the Library of Congress in Washington. A smaller Canadian equivalent could be started by removing more general items from the Library of Parliament that did not suit parliamentary use, thereby establishing the working core of a national collection, about 200,000 books he estimated. By housing the national library close to Parliament Hill, a synergy of sorts could be built by employing new ideas and new technologies. “The national library would then be within easy reach of the archives, the Library of Parliament, and all the government departments, and, as has been done in Washington, it could, if necessary, be connected with the other government buildings by pneumatic tubes, for the conveyance of both messages and books.” Of course, the national library could lend to major libraries across Canada, both public and college ones. At a time when Canadian college research libraries were meager in content and free public library service in short supply, even in major cities, his proposal was a cogent one.

Despite Burpee’s best efforts, sufficient support for his vision was short lived. The Dominion government had more immediate considerations, like equipping the newly founded Canadian navy, fighting a bitterly contested election in September 1911, and then sending forces overseas to fight in the First World War. A few years later, in May 1918, John Davis Barnett, a notable bibliophile and library promoter in Stratford, Ontario, repeated a call for a National Library and suggested his personal library of 40,000 volumes might form a nucleus for its collection. He envisioned, “a modern institution which shall not only store books, but under easy conditions lend books that are too scarce or costly for the ordinary free library to buy” in the *Ontario*

Library Review. After the war, in June 1920, Burpee repeated his expansive conception in the *Canadian Historical Review*: the library “must make itself a national centre of helpfulness to institutions and individuals from one end of the country to the other.” Forty years after 1914, Burpee was still pressing for a national library. He penned a short article, “Only Canada has no National Library” in *Saturday Night* on August 21, 1943, a few years before he died. He had a dream but did not live to see its fruition.

But others took up his cause. *Libraries in Canada*, a national study conducted by John Ridington, George H. Locke, and Mary J.L. Black, which was released in 1933, also argued the merits of a National Library. Later, after the Second World War, the Canadian Library Association, in conjunction with other national organizations, issued a call for its formation in Ottawa. The idea Burpee advocated was too sound to remain a vision—it would become a reality in 1953.

My blog on the renewed efforts to establish a National Library before 1946 is [at this link](#).

J. Davis Barnett's 1918 article, "[A National Library for Canada](#)," is available at the Internet Archive.

Monday, April 06, 2009

The Institute of Professional Librarians of Ontario

Recently a paper on IPLO was published by Greg Linnell in the Canadian Journal of Information and Library Science: *The Institute of Professional Librarians of Ontario; On the History and Historiography of a Professional Association*. Greg is interested in library history and is currently at the Library Services Centre in Kitchener, ON.

Greg Linnell's descriptive analysis of the histories of the Institute of Professional Librarians of Ontario (1960–1976) reveals not only the circumstances surrounding the creation, growth, and decline of this singular expression of the professionalization of librarianship but also foregrounds the ways in which the historical narration of the profession must look beyond the traditional delineation of intrinsic traits in order to circumscribe librarianship more adequately. To that end, consideration is given to one important factor, the Royal Commission Inquiry into Civil Rights (1964–71). It is evident that historical recovery of this sort is crucial to the profession's self-understanding as it negotiates its contemporary stance with respect to both librarians and the publics that they serve.

Greg has agreed to let me post this here, so please take time to read about. IPLO was an important Association, esp. in the 1960s, that expressed many librarians' views about professionalism in Ontario and their efforts to create a professional organization that could speak for librarians in all types of libraries.

To download Greg's article just go to : [IPLO](#)

Tuesday, October 28, 2008

Lucy Maud Montgomery's Ontario Library Connections

There are many enthusiastic Lucy Maud fans and scholars across the world, and the recent University of Guelph library's Montgomery conference held last weekend (Oct. 24 – 27, 2008) was a great success.

What many people do not know about are the library connections with Montgomery here in Ontario. After she moved to Swansea (now Toronto) in 1935, she became a library trustee on the local library committee, the Swansea Memorial Free Public Library that had been formed after WWI. Unfortunately, this coincided to some extent with Montgomery's later years that often saw her slip into a depressed state for some time (e.g., she really did not make many entries in her famous journal after the start of WWII). She did not write about libraries unfortunately for us. As a trustee, Montgomery would have been responsible for attending regular meetings, looking at finances, approving book purchases, etc. in the small Swansea operation.

But there is another connection as well. In 1929, Montgomery was asked to publish a short autobiography in the old *Ontario Library Review* that ran from 1916-1982. This was part of a series of articles by "famous" Canadian authors, and of course Montgomery easily qualified on that score. It makes for interesting reading, especially her stated love for poetry, her recollection about her father, and her obvious interest in her own book collection.

As this article in OLR (published by the Ontario Dept. of Education) is sometimes difficult to get a hold of, I am reprinting it here in this post as follows:

An Autobiographical Sketch

By L.M. Montgomery

I wish it were permissible to write fiction about oneself when asked for “an autobiographical sketch.” I get so tired of writing the same old facts over and over. As Anne herself said, I could imagine a heap of things about myself far more interesting than what I know! Any one of the “dream lives” I have lived by the score would be really thrilling.

I was born – praise to the gods! – in Prince Edward Island – the colourful little land of ruby and emerald sapphire. I come of Scottish ancestry, with a dash of English and Irish from several “grands” and “greats” and a French origin back in the mists of antiquity. The Montgomery’s emigrated from France in wake of the French Princess who married a Scottish King. But they became so Scotchified eventually that they even had a tartan of their own.

My mother died when I was a baby and I was brought up by my grandparents in the old Macneill homestead at Cavendish – eleven miles from a railway and twenty-four from a town, but only half a mile from one of the finest sea-beaches in the world – the old North Shore.

I went to the “district school” there from six to sixteen. Out of school I lived a simple wholesome happy life on the old farm, ranging through fields and woods, climbing over the rocky “capes” at the shore, picking berries in the “barrens” and apples in big orchards. I am especially thankful my childhood was spent in a spot where there were many trees – trees with personalities of their own, planted and tended by hands long dead, bound up with everything of joy and sorrow that visited my life. The old King orchard in my books, “The Story Girl,” and “The Golden Road,” was drawn from life.

My little existence was very simple and quiet. But it never held a dull moment for me. I had in my imagination a passport to fairyland. In a twinkling I could whisk myself into regions of wonderful adventure, unhampered by any restrictions of reality.

For anything I know I might have been born reading and writing. I have no recollection of learning to do either. I devoured every book I could lay my hands on and new most of “Paradise Lost” and “The Pilgrim’s Progress” by heart when I was eight. Novels were taboo, but fortunately there was no ban on poetry. I could revel it will in “the music of the immortals” – Tennyson, Byron, Scott, Milton, Burns. And one wonderful day when I was nine years old I discovered that I could write “poetry” myself!

It was called “Autumn,” and I wrote it on the back of an old post-office, “letter bill” – for writing paper was not too plentiful in that old farmhouse, where nothing was ever written save an occasional letter. I read it aloud to father. Father said it didn’t sound much like poetry. “It’s blank verse,” I cried. “Very blank,” said father.

I determined that my next poem should rhyme. And I wrote yards of verses about flowers and months and trees and stars and sunsets and addressed “Lines” to my friends. When I was thirteen I began sending verses to the Island weekly paper – and never heard either of or from them. Perhaps this is because I did not send any return stamps – being then in blissful ignorance of such a requirement.

Before this, however, when I was eleven years old, I had begun writing stories. I had a boxful of them – many tragic creations in which nearly everybody died. The “happy ending” was a thing unknown to me then. In those tales, “battle, murder and sudden death” were the order of the day.

When I was fifteen I had my first ride on a railway train, and it was a long one. I went out to Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, and spent a year with father who was living there. During that winter I sent a “poem,” written around one of the dramatic legends of the old North Shore, down to *Charlottetown Patriot* – and the Patriot printed it –thereby giving me the greatest moment of my life!

Being now, as I thought, fairly launched on a career, I kept sending verses to various papers and began to plume myself on being quite the literary person. I returned to Prince Edward Island the next summer, attended school for another year, then went to Prince of Wales College, Charlottetown, to qualify for a teacher’s licence. After that I taught a year. During these years I was writing all sorts of stuff, mainly verses and short stories, but had never succeeded in getting into any periodical that paid anything. All the stuff I sent to other magazines came promptly back. I used to feel woefully discouraged at times over those icy rejection slips. But I kept on. Whatever gifts the gods had denied me they had at least dowered me with stick-to-it-iveness!

After teaching a year I went to Halifax and spent a winter taking a selected course in English literature at Dalhousie College. One day in that winter I got a letter from the editor of an American juvenile magazine accepting a short story I had sent him and enclosing a check for five whole dollars. Never in all my life have I felt so rich as I did then! Did I spend it for needed boots and gloves? I did not. I wanted to get something I could keep forever in memory of having “arrived.” I hied me down town and purchased leather-bound dollar editions of Milton, Byron, Wordsworth, Longfellow, and Tennyson. I have repented me of many things rashly bought in my life, but never of those. I have them yet – dingy and shabby now – but with the springs of eternal life still bubbling freshly in them. Not that I do not love many modern poets. I do. But the old magic was good and remains good.

I taught two more years. Then grandfather died and I went home to stay with grandmother. She and I lived there alone together in the old farmhouse for thirteen years, with the exception of one winter which I spent in Halifax working as proof-reader and general handy-man on the staff of the *Daily Echo*. In those years I wrote literally thousands of poems and stories – most of the latter being juveniles for the United States periodicals, the Canadian magazine market at that time being practically non-existent.

I had always hoped to write a book – but I never seemed able to make a beginning. I have always hated beginning a story. When I get the first paragraph written I always feel as if it were half done. To begin a book seemed quite a stupendous task. Besides, I did not see how I could get time from my regular writing hours. In the end I never deliberately set out to write a book. It just “happened.”

In the spring of 1904 I was looking over my note book of plots for an idea for a short serial I had been asked to write for a certain Sunday School paper. I found a faded entry, written many years before, “Elderly couple apply to orphan asylum for boy. By mistake girl is sent them.” I thought this would do. I began to “block out” the chapters, devise incidents, and “brood up” my heroine. Anne began to expand in such a fashion that she soon seemed very real to me. I thought it rather a shame to waste her on an ephemeral seven-chapter serial. Then the thought came, “Make a book of it. You have the central idea and the heroine. All you need do is to spread it over enough chapters to amount a book.”

The result was “Anne of Green Gables.” I wrote it in the evenings after my regular day’s work was done. The next thing was to find a publisher. I typed it myself on my old second-hand typewriter that never made the capitals plain and wouldn’t print

“w” at all. Then I began sending it out – and kept on, because the publishers did not jump at it. It came back to me five times. The sixth time it was accepted. “Anne of Green Gables” was published in 1908. I did not dream it would be the success it has been. I thought girls in their teens might like it but that was the only audience I hoped to reach. Yet men and women who are grandparents, boys at school and college, statesmen at the helm of empires, soldiers in the trenches, old pioneers in the Australian bush, missionaries in China, monks in remote monasteries, Mohammedans in Java and red-headed girls all over the world have written to me of the delight they found in Anne.

With the publication of Green Gables a long struggle was over. Since then I have published thirteen novels and a volume of poems. Poetry was my first love and I have always regretted being false to it. But one must live.

Seventeen years ago I married a Presbyterian minister and came to Ontario to live. I like Ontario muchly but anyone who had once loved “the only Island there is” never really loves any other place. And so the scene of all my books, except the “Blue Castle” has been laid there.

The “Blue Castle” is in Muskoka. Muskoka is the only place I’ve ever been in that could be my Island’s rival in my heart. So I wanted to write a story about it.

My new book, “Magic for Marigold,” will be out next summer. I’ve gone back to “The Island” in it. For there the fairies still abide despite the raucous shrieks of motor cars. There are still a few spots where one who knows may find them.

Ontario Library Review, February 1929

Tuesday, December 11, 2007

The “Politics” of Public Libraries Again

Earlier this year, I posted an article by A.S. Popowich, “[The Politics of Public Library History](#),” *Dalhousie Journal of Information and Management*, v. 3, no. 1 (Winter 2007), to Libraries Today website. The author discusses a number of interesting theories about the early development of public libraries and their fundamental societal mission and value. Web 2.0 is mentioned too, for after all, perhaps ideas circulating in the virtual world could be related to those in print culture.

There are a few points I would like to investigate, but first a couple of corrections. The article ranges “far and wide” on the critical theory side and might attract or repel library historians of various persuasions on this score. But what got my attention were two points where the author misconstrues things.

First, in summarizing Robert V. Williams’ 1981 article in the *Journal of Library History* 16 (2) 1981, 327-36 on “The Public Library as Dependent Variable” (JLH is now re-titled *Libraries & the Cultural Record*), Popowich highlights three variables that are often discussed in the library literature devoted to the rise of public libraries in the 19th century: the social conditions theory, the democratic traditions theory, and the social control theory. All of these are covered and debated in our historical accounts of early library development. But, the fourth variable Williams identified, people – “Libraries and Librarians” – gets no mention. Strangely, Popowich, who leans to the political left, ignores the idea that people and groups have the power to create and change institutional arrangements. In this case, the well documented “public library movement” of the 19th c. played much the same role as did English workers in E.P. Thompson’s classic work *Making of the English Working Class* (1963) – here, we find the vital agency of individuals at work – people

creating their own class consciousness as they interact with other classes/groups – during a historical period. Thompson, a notable leftist, actually decried the traditional, rigid concept of structure underlying class and influenced a generation of social historians to use Marxist ideas and theories more freely in their research. Thompson's lasting legacy is that people do "make their history."

Why is this fourth (missing) variable so important for Canadian libraries? In Ontario, the public library movement was actively involved in promoting and creating libraries across the province for a period of three-quarters of a century after 1850: it's a reminder that people can be fundamental "makers of history" and that structural models (e.g., "democratic tradition"), various societal factors, and theories such as social control are not necessarily the primary historical factors in library history. In fact, I think that social control is not particularly effective as an explanatory tool in historical work due to various limitations in definition and inappropriate use. When it comes to the politics of public libraries in 19th c. Canada, from my standpoint, it was a matter of farmers, businessmen, women, tradesmen, local politicians, educators, ministers, etc. trying to establish provincial legislation, local political administration, and promotion of services to unserved municipalities that proved to be the central focus for creating a public entity known as the free public library and for describing it historically.

Second, the author (perhaps accidentally) misquotes what I wrote a decade ago in my review of Alistair Black's 1996 *New History of the English Public Library*. In writing about Black's application of Idealism to the development of English libraries at the turn of the 20th c. in his cultural history, I mentioned that this was a weaker section than his chapters on the Utilitarian model he used for the 19th c. I wrote that applying Black's Utilitarian-Idealist model to public libraries in Canada would "be quite a challenge." I did not state that it "might not be difficult" as the Popowich indicates; and his citation should be to page 31 of my

article in Epilogue (1996), not page 80 as it appears in this online version. Further, Popowich interprets my position on the societal influence of Idealism (e.g., equality of opportunity or state action) to be one that would concentrate on the library as a liberal, democratic, or capitalist institution and that in so doing I would ignore power relationships or other political alternatives to the “liberal-capitalist” state that emerged in Canada after 1850. My longer comments about state activism and the changing nature of liberal thought in the context of social history (unlike cultural history) were not referenced, and it appeared my approach would be an uncritical one.

Quite the contrary, it is not my intention to meander in a blinkered fashion across the Canadian historical landscape occupied by libraries! It is entirely possible to theorize and write about libraries in a historical “liberal setting” and demonstrate why liberal values and ideas were dominant without ignoring other history-as-account theories or history-as-event political options. Ian MacKay’s fascinating “The liberal order framework: a prospectus for a reconnaissance of Canadian history,” *Canadian Historical Review* v. 81 (Dec. 2000) pp. 641ff proposes the model of liberalism as an overarching political structure to help explain change in Canadian life generally. It could also be used in the case of public libraries because recent research has shown that liberal ideas at the local level of government where libraries were created and maintained in various forms are very useful in accounting for the development of an institution that values reading and the dissemination of information. Of course, the influence of liberalism fluctuated over time and was often contradictory – on the face of things, liberalism valued dissent, but public discourse/debates often meant that minority opinions or contrarian ideas were suppressed.

Also, for a thought provoking, postmodern view of liberalism and public libraries in England, Patrick Joyce’s *Rule of*

Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City (London, Verso, 2003) pp. 128-137 is a must. Joyce applies Michael Foucault's idea of "governmentality" – intellectually organized ways (e.g., ideas or techniques) by which people are regulated and governed – to public libraries in Victorian Britain (actually, Joyce published an article with the same content previously in 1999 as "The Politics of the Liberal Archive," *History of the Human Sciences*, v. 12, no. 2, 1999, pp. 35-49). Unlike Alistair Black, who prefers to employ Foucault's "power/knowledge" theory to library development, Joyce explores the "governmental-liberal" aspects of social space, bibliographic control, and public discourse regarding the value of libraries and touches on different historical ideas. I think these examples, which appeared after I wrote my review of Black's *New History* in 1996, indicate lines of historical narrative and explanation that I could pursue profitably, if I wanted, without being "tunnelistic" or uncritical. Awareness of different models, theories, interpretations, and publications in library history is crucial, and I can't understand, for example, why Joyce's work hasn't drawn any attention in the library literature to date.

Having said all this, I liked the ideas in Popowich's article — where have our Marxist-leaning library historians been all these years? It is not such a bad stance; Marx has had an incredible influence on the writing of history for more than a century-and-a-half. And I must admit, I prefer a dash of Habermas rather than Foucault on my library history plate.

My original review of Alistair Black's *New History* is [at this link](#).